



# BEYOND CENTRALIZED CONTROL AND DECENTRALIZED EXECUTION

BY

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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this thesis is to analyze the role of centralized execution in air power doctrine. However, research showed that the problem was much deeper than merely a shift toward centralized execution. The problem is in the use of the term “centralized execution” itself. This term is not clearly defined in doctrine and its sister term, decentralized execution, is incorrectly defined. These terms should really describe the level of control exercised by senior leaders over tactical operations. True centralized execution—using technology to literally execute tactical events from afar—presents its own set of problems. Doctrine needs to be clarified to remove this confusion.

This discussion over what some would refer to as “simple semantics” is grounded in the strategic objectives sought when employing air power. The Joint Force Air Component Commander (JFACC) is responsible for employing air power to achieve strategic effectiveness. Therefore, the trend toward close control (incorrectly referred to as centralized execution) stems from the desire and ability to control the strategic effects created by tactical operations. Air Force leaders seem to fully understand this, but tactical operators do not. Both doctrine and training emphasize tactical efficiency, duping war fighters into believing that tactical efficiency is critical to strategic effectiveness. In reality, history proves that often this is not the case.

My research demonstrates that the Air Force needs to abandon the terminology in its master tenet of air power. Future JFACCs will determine the appropriate level of control required in their situation, and operators should not be surprised if the JFACC chooses close control. It is time for the Air Force to move beyond centralized control and decentralized execution to a deeper understanding of the contextual factors leading senior leaders to actively involve themselves into tactical operations.

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## INTRODUCTION

CENTRALIZED CONTROL AND DECENTRALIZED EXECUTION OF AIR AND SPACE POWER ARE CRITICAL TO EFFECTIVE EMPLOYMENT OF AIR AND SPACE POWER. INDEED, IT IS THE FUNDAMENTAL ORGANIZING PRINCIPLE FOR AIR AND SPACE POWER, HAVING BEEN PROVEN OVER DECADES OF EXPERIENCE AS THE MOST EFFECTIVE AND EFFICIENT MEANS OF EMPLOYING AIR AND SPACE POWER.

--AIR FORCE DOCTRINE DOCUMENT 1,

2003

Decentralized execution has long been and is still the cornerstone of Air Force doctrine.<sup>1</sup> However, for specific missions with strategic impact, centralized execution may be an emerging tenet for future air operations. Through tactical precision strikes, air power has become the preferred national instrument for achieving strategic level effects. Improved technological capabilities combined with the increasing influence of political factors drove senior leader's involvement into tactical affairs. In addition, the nature of warfare is changing for the United States. Specifically, the combination of applying overwhelming force to achieve limited objectives highlights that tactical efficiency is no longer necessary to achieve strategic objectives. Twenty-first century realities drive the need to clarify the role that centralized execution will play in future air power strategy.

For centralized control and decentralized execution to remain the 'master tenet,' it must survive careful scrutiny.<sup>2</sup> The Air Force preaches decentralized execution as the best way to employ air power, yet when operators go off to war, they often experience centralized execution. In the heat of the moment, one should be able to rely on a master tenet, yet in today's scenarios, proper procedure often entails calling home for further guidance. This work challenges two underlying assumptions—that both tactical flexibility and tactical efficiency are required for effective air power employment—bringing the master tenet of air power into question.

### CONFUSION EXISTS

THE LACK OF A CLEAR DEFINITION OF CENTRALIZED EXECUTION IN AIR FORCE BASIC DOCTRINE LEADS TO CONFUSION AND UNFORTUNATELY LEAVES THE TERM OPEN TO INTERPRETATION. AIR FORCE DOCTRINE REFERS TO THE DANGERS OF CENTRALIZED EXECUTION, BUT WITHOUT DEFINING IT, THE TERM HAS NO REAL SUBSTANCE. HOWEVER, AIR FORCE DOCTRINE DOES DEFINE DECENTRALIZED EXECUTION.

**DECENTRALIZED EXECUTION** OF AIR AND SPACE POWER IS THE DELEGATION OF EXECUTION AUTHORITY TO RESPONSIBLE AND CAPABLE LOWER-LEVEL COMMANDERS TO ACHIEVE EFFECTIVE SPAN OF CONTROL AND TO FOSTER DISCIPLINED INITIATIVE, SITUATIONAL RESPONSIVENESS, AND TACTICAL FLEXIBILITY.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Air Force Doctrine Document (AFDD) 1, *Air Force Basic Doctrine*, 17 November 2003, 28.

<sup>2</sup> The term "master tenet" was first used to describe centralized control and decentralized execution in AFM 1-1, *Basic Aerospace Doctrine of the United States Air Force*, March 1992, 113.

<sup>3</sup> AFDD 1, 97.

THIS DEFINITION IS UNCLEAR AS TO WHAT EXACTLY THE DELEGATION OF EXECUTION AUTHORITY MEANS. AIR FORCE DOCTRINE SPECIALIST, WOODY PARRYMORE EXPLAINS, “BECAUSE THE DEFINITION OF DECENTRALIZED EXECUTION IS IMPRECISE, AIRMEN CANNOT COHERENTLY DEFINE THE CONCEPT OF OR RECOGNIZE CENTRALIZED EXECUTION.”<sup>4</sup> THEREFORE, DERIVING A DEFINITION OF CENTRALIZED EXECUTION AS THE OPPOSITE OF DECENTRALIZED EXECUTION LEADS TO:

**CENTRALIZED EXECUTION** IS THE RETENTION OF EXECUTION AUTHORITY FROM SUBORDINATE COMMANDERS.

SINCE EXECUTION AUTHORITY ALREADY RESIDES WITH THE JFACC, THIS DEFINITION REALLY DESCRIBES THE LEVEL OF CONTROL. THEREFORE, THE ISSUE OF CENTRALIZED EXECUTION REFERS TO JFACCs (OR HIGHER SENIOR LEADERS) CHOOSING TO EXERT INCREASED INFLUENCE OVER TACTICAL OPERATIONS. OPERATORS WHO COMPLAIN ABOUT CENTRALIZED EXECUTION ARE REALLY COMPLAINING ABOUT THIS LEVEL OF CONTROL FROM ABOVE.

### **CONTROL DEFINED**

LIKE CENTRALIZED EXECUTION, CONTROL IS NOT SPECIFICALLY DEFINED IN AIR FORCE DOCTRINE. HOWEVER, IT IS INCLUDED UNDER THE DEFINITION OF COMMAND AND CONTROL: “THE EXERCISE OF AUTHORITY AND DIRECTION BY A PROPERLY DESIGNATED COMMANDER OVER ASSIGNED AND ATTACHED FORCES IN ACCOMPLISHMENT OF THE MISSION.”<sup>5</sup> CONTROL IS ALSO INCLUDED IN THE AIR FORCE’S DEFINITION OF CENTRALIZED CONTROL, WHICH IS “THE PLANNING, DIRECTION, PRIORITIZATION, ALLOCATION, SYNCHRONIZATION, INTEGRATION, AND DECONFLICTION OF AIR AND SPACE CAPABILITIES TO ACHIEVE THE OBJECTIVES OF THE JOINT FORCE COMMANDER.”<sup>6</sup> JOINT DOCTRINE EXPLAINS CENTRALIZED CONTROL IN A MORE DIRECT FASHION: “IN JOINT AIR OPERATIONS, PLACING WITHIN ONE COMMANDER THE RESPONSIBILITY AND AUTHORITY FOR PLANNING, DIRECTING, AND COORDINATING A MILITARY OPERATION OR GROUP/CATEGORY OF OPERATIONS.”<sup>7</sup> IN SHORT, CONTROL IS THE PLANNING, DIRECTING, AND COORDINATING OF MILITARY OPERATIONS.

THE ARGUMENT OVER CENTRALIZED EXECUTION IS REALLY AN ARGUMENT OVER THE LEADER’S LEVEL OF CONTROL. UNDER HIS AUTHORITY AS THE AIR COMPONENT COMMANDER, THE JFACC HAS THE OPTION OF CONTROLLING HIS OPERATIONS ACROSS A SPECTRUM OF CONTROL LEVELS RANGING FROM AUTONOMOUS OPERATION TO CLOSE CONTROL.<sup>8</sup> DURING AUTONOMOUS OPERATION, TACTICAL UNITS

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<sup>4</sup> Woody W. Parrymore, “Defining Decentralized Execution in Order to Recognize Centralized Execution” *Air and Space Power Journal*, Fall 2004, 25.

<sup>5</sup> AFDD 1, 97.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 95.

<sup>7</sup> Joint Publication 1-02, *Unified Action Armed Forces (UNAAF)*, 10 July 2001, 81.

<sup>8</sup> The terms ‘close control’ and ‘autonomous operation’ are borrowed from a control continuum table in Air Force Instruction 11-214, *Flying Operations*, 4 January 2005. The term close control comes from a type of guidance a pilot receives from an airborne controller in an air-to-air intercept. Under close control, the controller gives continuous updates to the pilot, removing judgment from the operator’s side of the equation. The operator is left merely to execute the directions given. The same scenario resides with air

RECEIVE WHAT THEY NEED TO DO AND ARE LEFT COMPLETELY TO FIGURE OUT HOW TO DO IT. AT THE OTHER EXTREME, TACTICAL UNITS UNDER CLOSE CONTROL ARE TOLD WHAT TO DO AND HOW TO DO IT. STRATEGIST EDWARD LUTTWAK DESCRIBES THE TRADE-OFF BETWEEN THE TWO LEVELS OF CONTROL AS A “DELICATE BALANCE BETWEEN THE NEED TO SUPERVISE SUBORDINATE COMBAT UNITS AND THE OPPOSITE NEED TO ALLOW SOME ROOM FOR INITIATIVE.”<sup>9</sup> THERE ARE ADVANTAGES TO BOTH OF THESE TYPES OF CONTROL, ACCORDING TO THE SITUATION. THEREFORE, THE QUESTION BECOMES, UNDER WHAT CONDITIONS IS ‘CLOSE CONTROL’ THE BEST WAY TO EMPLOY AIR POWER?

## THE ROAD AHEAD

CHAPTER ONE FOCUSES ON THE DOCTRINAL HISTORY OF DECENTRALIZED AND CENTRALIZED EXECUTION. IN 1971, AIR FORCE MANUAL 1-1, *UNITED STATES AIR FORCE BASIC DOCTRINE*, ATTEMPTED TO ADDRESS THE CORE PROBLEM OF “CENTRALIZED CONTROL RUN AMUCK” BY CREATING THE TERM ‘DECENTRALIZED EXECUTION.’<sup>10</sup> THE TERM, ALTHOUGH AMBIGUOUS AND UNDEFINED AT THE TIME, ADDRESSED THE ISSUE AND HAS BEEN PART OF THE MASTER AIR POWER TENET EVERY SINCE. DECENTRALIZED EXECUTION WAS BORN IN AN ERA WHERE TACTICAL FLEXIBILITY WAS PARAMOUNT. HOWEVER, SINCE 1991, THE AIR OPERATIONS CENTER (AOC) HAS PROVEN THE WORTH OF OPERATIONAL FLEXIBILITY OVER TACTICAL FLEXIBILITY. THIS OPERATIONAL FLEXIBILITY, HOWEVER, LED TO TACTICAL RIGIDITY, AS OPERATORS HAD TO WAIT FOR INSTRUCTION, THEREBY CREATING A TENSION BETWEEN OPERATORS AND THE AOC. IN 2003, AIR FORCE DOCTRINE DOCUMENT 1, *AIR FORCE BASIC DOCTRINE*, FIRST MENTIONED CENTRALIZED EXECUTION BY STATING THAT IN CERTAIN SITUATIONS SENIOR LEADERS MAY WISH TO “CONTROL STRATEGIC EFFECTS, EVEN AT THE SACRIFICE OF TACTICAL EFFICIENCY.”<sup>11</sup> ANY LEADER, NOT JUST AIR LEADERS, MUST BE COGNIZANT OF STRATEGIC IMPACTS, EVEN AT THE EXPENSE OF TACTICAL EFFICIENCY. CURRENT DOCTRINAL GUIDANCE, WITH THE ADDITION OF THE CENTRALIZED EXECUTION CAVEAT, DID MORE TO CONFUSE THE ISSUE THAN TO CLARIFY IT.

CHAPTER TWO OUTLINES THE THREE MAJOR CONTEXTUAL CHANGES—TECHNOLOGY, POLITICAL INFLUENCE, AND THE CHANGING NATURE OF US WARFARE—LEADING TO INCREASED EMPHASIS ON TACTICAL AFFAIRS. TECHNOLOGY PROVIDES THE *CAPABILITY* TO CLOSELY CONTROL TACTICAL OPERATIONS AND POLITICAL INFLUENCE PROVIDES THE *NECESSITY* TO DO SO. OVERWHELMING US ‘MIGHT’ DROVE SENIOR LEADERS TO CONCERN THEMSELVES WITH INCREASINGLY PUBLICIZED POLITICAL ISSUES—INTERNATIONAL AND DOMESTIC OPINION, COALITION COHESION, COLLATERAL DAMAGE, AND CASUALTY MINIMIZATION. MOREOVER, THE STRATEGY OF REGIME CHANGE IN IRAQ, WHILE WINNING THE HEARTS AND MINDS OF THE POPULATION, WILL ONLY CONTINUE TO INCREASE THE POLITICAL INFLUENCE ON MILITARY OPERATIONS. LAST, THE NATURE OF US WARFARE HAS CHANGED. WHERE TACTICAL

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traffic controllers giving terminal control to pilots on an instrument approach. The pilots execute what they are told to do. The title of air traffic ‘controller’ paints the picture of what exactly is taking place.

<sup>9</sup> Edward N. Luttwak, *Strategy: The Logic of War and Peace* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press, 2003), 12.

<sup>10</sup> Air Force Manual 1-1, *United States Air Force Basic Doctrine*, 28 September 1971.

<sup>11</sup> AFDD 1, 29-30.

EFFICIENCY WAS VITAL FOR ANY LEVEL OF EFFECTIVENESS IN AIR POWER'S EARLY YEARS, THIS IS NO LONGER THE CASE. EFFECTIVENESS AT ALL LEVELS IS NOW ACHIEVABLE EVEN ABSENT TACTICAL EFFICIENCY.

IN CHAPTER THREE, I ANALYZE HOW THESE CONTEXTUAL FACTORS HAVE AFFECTED AIR POWER EMPLOYMENT IN THREE CURRENT OPERATIONS. OPERATION NOBLE EAGLE REPRESENTS A SITUATION WHERE SENIOR LEADERS INVOLVE THEMSELVES QUICKLY DUE TO THE UNIQUE POLITICAL SENSITIVITY OF THE OPERATION. IN OPERATIONS ENDURING FREEDOM AND IRAQI FREEDOM, LEADERS CLOSELY CONTROLLED TIME-SENSITIVE TARGETING OPERATIONS USING UNMANNED AERIAL VEHICLES (UAVs), PRECISION MUNITIONS, AND ON-CALL AIR POWER TO DIRECT TACTICAL ACTIONS. WHILE THESE RECENT OPERATIONS DO NOT EXHIBIT THE ENTIRE SPECTRUM OF AIR OPERATIONS, THEY DO PROVIDE, HOWEVER, SOLID EVIDENCE AS TO THE REALITIES OF AIR POWER EMPLOYMENT IN THE NEAR FUTURE.

CHAPTER FOUR HIGHLIGHTS IMPLICATIONS AND OFFERS RECOMMENDATIONS. DUE TO THE CONFUSION INHERENT IN THE CURRENT TERMINOLOGY, I PRESENT A MODEL THAT USES A CONTINUUM SPANNING FROM AUTONOMOUS OPERATION TO CLOSE CONTROL. THIS MODEL DEMONSTRATES THAT THE LEVEL OF CONTROL LEADERS UTILIZE IS DIRECTLY RELATED TO THEIR PERCEPTION OF THE POLITICAL FACTORS SURROUNDING THE OPERATION ALONG WITH TECHNOLOGY AND THE CHANGING NATURE OF US WARFARE. THIS MODEL FALLS SHORT OF PROVIDING A PERFECT ANSWER. HOWEVER, IT DOES DEMONSTRATE A MORE THOROUGH LOOK INTO THE FACTORS THAT LEAD TO SENIOR LEADER INVOLVEMENT INTO TACTICAL AFFAIRS. FUTURE CONFLICTS MAY CALL FOR THIS METHOD OF CLOSE CONTROL.

WORDS MATTER. IN THE WORDS OF SIR WINSTON S. CHURCHILL, "AIR POWER IS THE MOST DIFFICULT OF ALL FORMS OF MILITARY FORCE TO MEASURE, OR EVEN TO EXPRESS IN PRECISE TERMS."<sup>12</sup> THE AIR FORCE, NEVERTHELESS, MUST ABANDON THE 'ONE SIZE FITS ALL' APPROACH THAT HAS BEEN AROUND FOR PERHAPS TOO LONG. TECHNOLOGICAL ENHANCEMENTS, POLITICAL INFLUENCE, AND THE CHANGING NATURE OF US WARFARE WILL CONTINUE TO REQUIRE LEADERS TO CLOSELY CONTROL TACTICAL EVENTS. DECENTRALIZED EXECUTION WILL NOT ALWAYS BE THE ANSWER. ULTIMATE SUCCESS IN REALIZING THE TRUE POTENTIAL OF NEW TECHNOLOGIES, AS STEPHEN BIDDLE NOTES, REQUIRES "SWEEPING ORGANIZATIONAL AND DOCTRINAL CHANGES."<sup>13</sup> IT IS TIME FOR THE AIR FORCE TO MOVE BEYOND CENTRALIZED CONTROL AND DECENTRALIZED EXECUTION, TERMS WHOSE USEFULNESS EXPIRED WITH THE END OF THE COLD WAR.

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<sup>12</sup> Winston S. Churchill, *The Second World War: The Gathering Storm* (Cambridge, Mass.: The Riverside Press, 1948), 111.

<sup>13</sup> Stephen Biddle, *Military Power: Explaining Victory and Defeat in Modern Battle* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2004), 196.

## CHAPTER 1

### DOCTRINAL EVOLUTION

*THE ESSENCE OF DOCTRINE LIES IN ITS PURPOSE: TO TEACH, TO ENDOW A BODY OF PEOPLE WITH A COMMON SET OF BROAD ASSUMPTIONS, IDEAS, VALUES, AND ATTITUDES AS A GUIDE TO FUTURE ACTIONS...MEANINGFUL AIR FORCE DOCTRINE, SUITABLE FOR ALL THE COMPLEXITIES AND FORMS OF MODERN AEROSPACE WARFARE, IS THE SYNTHESIS OF THEORY AND EXPERIENCE.*

*--LIEUTENANT GENERAL JOHN W. PAULY, 1976*

DOCTRINE MEANS DIFFERENT THINGS TO DIFFERENT PEOPLE. SOME VIEW IT AS CURRENT GUIDANCE, WHILE OTHERS BELIEVE DOCTRINE IS NECESSARILY OUTDATED AND OFFERS NOTHING MORE THAN COMPELLING HISTORY. IN HIS SEMINAL TWO-VOLUME WORK, *IDEAS, CONCEPTS, DOCTRINE: BASIC THINKING IN THE UNITED STATES AIR FORCE*, DR ROBERT FRANK FUTRELL DETAILS HOW EARLY AIR LEADERS STRUGGLED WITH THE CONCEPT OF DOCTRINE AND HOW IT SHOULD BE USED.<sup>14</sup> WHILE THIS STRUGGLE CONTINUES TODAY TO A CERTAIN EXTENT, GEN PAULY'S DESCRIPTION OF DOCTRINE AS THE "SYNTHESIS OF THEORY AND EXPERIENCE" REPRESENTS THE BEST ENCAPSULATION OF WHAT DOCTRINE BRINGS TO THE FIGHT TODAY.<sup>15</sup> THEREFORE, DOCTRINE MUST BE AS COMPREHENSIVE AS POSSIBLE TO REPRESENT GUIDANCE FOR A WIDE VARIETY OF POTENTIAL CONFLICTS.

CURRENT AIR POWER DOCTRINE STILL FOCUSES PRIMARILY ON COLD WAR EXPERIENCES AND DOCTRINE HAS YET TO ADAPT TO THE POST-COLD WAR ENVIRONMENT. COMBINED WITH THE EXPONENTIAL GROWTH OF TECHNOLOGY, THIS ADAPTATION NEEDS TO TAKE PLACE AT A FASTER PACE. DOCTRINE WRITERS MUST CAPTURE THE FUNDAMENTAL LESSONS OF RECENT CONFLICTS AND INCORPORATE THESE LESSONS INTO EACH REVISION OF AIR POWER DOCTRINE. FUTURE CONFLICTS THAT VARY SIGNIFICANTLY FROM EXISTING DOCTRINE COULD MEAN ONE OF TWO THINGS: EITHER AN ABERRATION THAT CAN BE OVERLOOKED AS SUCH, OR THE BEGINNING OF AN ENTIRE NEW CHAPTER IN AIR POWER HISTORY. FOR YEARS, DOCTRINE WRITERS HAVE STRUGGLED IN MAKING THE CORRECT CALL.

IN THIS CHAPTER, I ANALYZE THE EVOLUTION OF CENTRALIZED CONTROL AND DECENTRALIZED EXECUTION AS THE AIR FORCE MASTER AIR POWER TENET. THIS WALK THROUGH DOCTRINE SHOWS THE CONFUSING NATURE OF THE TERMS CHOSEN. THE TERMS 'CONTROL' AND 'EXECUTION' WERE OFTEN EITHER CONFLATED OR USED INTERCHANGEABLY. ONLY A WALK THROUGH THE EVOLUTION OF THESE TERMS CAN SHED LIGHT ONTO HOW DOCTRINE GOT TO WHERE IT IS TODAY.

### PREVIOUS AIR FORCE DOCTRINE

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<sup>14</sup> Robert Frank Futrell, *Ideas, Concepts, Doctrine: Basic Thinking in the United States Air Force, Volume I 1907-1960* (Maxwell Air Force Base, Ala.: Air University Press, 1989), 1-12.

<sup>15</sup> John W. Pauly, "The Thread of Doctrine," *Air University Review*, May-June 1976, n.p., on-line, Internet, 21 March 2005, available from <http://www.airpower.au.af.mil/airchronicles/aureview/1976/may-jun/pauly.html>.

GENERAL WILLIAM “BILLY” MITCHELL BUILT THE FOUNDATION FOR THE CENTRALIZED CONTROL OF AIR POWER. AS CHIEF OF THE AIR SERVICE, GEN MITCHELL DIRECTED 1,500 ALLIED AIRPLANES IN SUPPORT OF GENERAL JACK PERSHING’S DRIVE TO SAINT-MIHIEL.<sup>16</sup> REFLECTING ON HIS WORLD WAR I EXPERIENCE, MITCHELL WAS CONVINCED OF THE NEED FOR A SEPARATE AIR FORCE COMMANDED BY A SINGLE AIRMAN. HIS QUEST LAID THE GROUNDWORK FOR CENTRALIZED CONTROL. HOWEVER, MITCHELL’S CONTEMPORARIES DID NOT QUICKLY ACCEPT CENTRALIZED CONTROL. REFLECTING ON THE GREAT WAR IN 1936, NOTED THEORIST J.F.C. FULLER STATED, “NOTHING WAS MORE DREADFUL THAN TO WITNESS A CHAIN OF MEN STARTING WITH A BATTALION COMMANDER AND ENDING WITH AN ARMY COMMANDER SITTING IN TELEPHONE BOXES...TALKING, TALKING, TALKING, IN PLACE OF LEADING, LEADING, LEADING.”<sup>17</sup> MITCHELL CHAMPIONED THE NECESSITY OF CENTRALIZATION WHILE FULLER ADVOCATED THE PRIMACY OF DECENTRALIZATION.

IN 1943, WAR DEPARTMENT FIELD MANUAL 100-20, *COMMAND AND EMPLOYMENT OF AIR POWER*, FIRST CODIFIED CENTRALIZED CONTROL OF AIR POWER INTO US DOCTRINE.

“THE INHERENT FLEXIBILITY OF AIR POWER IS ITS GREATEST ASSET...SUCH CONCENTRATED USE OF THE AIR STRIKING FORCE IS A BATTLE WINNING FACTOR OF THE FIRST IMPORTANCE. CONTROL OF AVAILABLE AIR POWER MUST BE CENTRALIZED AND COMMAND MUST BE EXERCISED THROUGH THE AIR FORCE COMMANDER IF THIS INHERENT FLEXIBILITY AND ABILITY TO DELIVER A DECISIVE BLOW ARE TO BE FULLY EXPLOITED.”<sup>18</sup>

THE LESSONS LEARNED IN THE NORTH AFRICA CAMPAIGN DURING WORLD WAR II PROVED A WATERSHED EVENT FOR AIR POWER AND PROPELLED THE TENET OF CENTRALIZED CONTROL INTO DOCTRINE.

HOWEVER, ONLY SIX YEARS AFTER ITS CREATION AS AN INDEPENDENT BRANCH OF THE MILITARY IN 1947, THE AIR FORCE OVERTURNED ‘CENTRALIZED CONTROL’ IN ITS FIRST BASIC DOCTRINE DOCUMENT, AIR FORCE MANUAL (AFM) 1-2, *UNITED STATES AIR FORCE BASIC DOCTRINE*.

THE EFFECTIVE UTILIZATION OF MILITARY FORCES REQUIRES THAT COMMAND SYSTEMS BE ESTABLISHED WHICH WILL GUARANTEE BOTH CENTRALIZED OVERALL DIRECTION AND **DECENTRALIZED CONTROL** OF OPERATIONS UNDER APPROPRIATE SUBORDINATE COMMANDERS.<sup>19</sup> [EMPHASIS ADDED]

‘CENTRALIZED OVERALL DIRECTION’ REPLACED ‘CENTRALIZED CONTROL’ AND THE ADDED TERM, ‘DECENTRALIZED CONTROL,’ STAYED IN DOCTRINE UNTIL 1975. THIS SWITCH IN TERMINOLOGY WITH VERY LITTLE CHANGE TO THE SUPPORTING TEXT DEMONSTRATES THE CONFLATION OF TERMS.

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<sup>16</sup> Mark A. Clodfelter, “Molding Airpower Convictions: Development and Legacy of William Mitchell’s Strategic Thought,” in *The Paths of Heaven: The Evolution of Airpower Theory*, ed Phillip Meilinger (Maxwell AFB, Ala.: Air University Press, 1997), 86.

<sup>17</sup> J.F.C. Fuller, *Generalship: Its Diseases and Their Cure* (Harrisburg, PA: Military Services Publishing Co., 1936), 61.

<sup>18</sup> War Department Field Manual 100-20, *Command and Employment of Air Power* (War Department, 21 July 1943), 2.

<sup>19</sup> Air Force Manual 1-2, *United States Air Force Basic Doctrine*, Washington, D.C., 1 April 1953, 5.

TWENTY YEARS LATER, THE EARLY LESSONS OF THE VIETNAM WAR LED TO THE ADDITION OF 'DECENTRALIZED EXECUTION.' THE 1971 VERSION OF BASIC DOCTRINE, AFM 1-1, *UNITED STATES AIR FORCE BASIC DOCTRINE*, FIRST CODIFIED 'DECENTRALIZED EXECUTION' IN REACTION TO PRESIDENT LYNDON B. JOHNSON'S CLOSE INVOLVEMENT IN THE VIETNAM WAR. AFM 1-1 STATED:

TO REALIZE THE FULL POTENTIAL OF THESE CHARACTERISTICS, AEROSPACE FORCES MUST BE CENTRALLY ALLOCATED AND DIRECTED AT A LEVEL WHICH PERMITS EXPLOITATION OF DIVERSE CAPABILITIES IN SUPPORT OF OVERALL OBJECTIVES. CONCURRENTLY, MISSION CONTROL AND EXECUTION OF SPECIFIC TASKS MUST BE DECENTRALIZED TO A LEVEL WHICH PERMITS MAXIMUM RESPONSIVENESS TO LOCAL CONDITIONS AND REQUIREMENTS. THESE COMPLEMENTARY CONCEPTS—CENTRALIZED ALLOCATION AND DIRECTION AND DECENTRALIZED CONTROL AND EXECUTION—ARE FUNDAMENTAL TO THE EFFECTIVE APPLICATION OF AEROSPACE POWER.<sup>20</sup>

WHAT IS DECENTRALIZED CONTROL, AND FOR THAT MATTER, DECENTRALIZED EXECUTION? LACKING DEFINITIONS, READERS WERE LEFT TO INTERPRET (OR MISINTERPRET) THEM ACCORDING TO THEIR OWN NEEDS. HOWEVER, INDEPENDENT OF THE CONFUSING TERMINOLOGY, THERE WAS A CLEAR NEED FOR MAXIMUM RESPONSIVENESS TO LOCAL CONDITIONS AND REQUIREMENTS (TACTICAL FLEXIBILITY).

THE 1992 VERSION OF AIR FORCE MANUAL 1-1, *BASIC AEROSPACE DOCTRINE OF THE UNITED STATES AIR FORCE*, VOLUME II, PRESENTED A MORE THOROUGH SYNOPSIS OF THIS ISSUE.

THE VIETNAM EXPERIENCE LED TO THE APPEARANCE OF DECENTRALIZED EXECUTION AS A FORMAL TENET OF AEROSPACE POWER. IT FIRST APPEARED IN AIR FORCE DOCTRINE IN 1971 IN REACTION TO THE MANNER IN WHICH THE BOMBING OF NORTH VIETNAM WAS DIRECTED. FEARING ESCALATION TO A NUCLEAR CONFRONTATION, PRESIDENT JOHNSON TOOK PERSONAL CONTROL OF THE ROLLING THUNDER BOMBING CAMPAIGN (1965-1968), SELECTING NOT ONLY TARGETS BUT ALSO OFTEN DICTATING TIMING, ORDNANCE LOADS, SORTIES, AND ALTERNATE TARGETS. IN A SENSE, JOHNSON'S ACTION WAS CENTRALIZED CONTROL RUN AMUCK WITH ALL STRATEGIC, MOST OPERATIONAL, AND MANY TACTICAL DECISIONS EMANATING FROM THE PRESIDENT'S NOW INFAMOUS TUESDAY LUNCH MEETINGS. THE RESULT WAS A CAMPAIGN UNRESPONSIVE TO LOCAL CONDITIONS; A CAMPAIGN THAT LACKED BOTH OPERATIONAL AND TACTICAL FLEXIBILITY.<sup>21</sup>

THEREFORE, THE ADDITION OF 'DECENTRALIZED CONTROL AND EXECUTION' FROM THE 1971 AFM 1-1 ATTEMPTED TO ADDRESS THE CORE PROBLEM OF "CENTRALIZED CONTROL RUN AMUCK," CLEARLY A CIVIL-MILITARY RELATIONSHIP ISSUE. THE 2003 AIR FORCE DOCTRINE DOCUMENT 1, *AIR FORCE BASIC DOCTRINE*, ADDED THE FOLLOWING LESSON LEARNED: "ALTHOUGH THE LESSONS OF LINEBACKER II HAVE BEEN AND CONTINUE TO BE DEBATED, ONE ELEMENT STANDS OUT: OVERCENTRALIZATION OF PLANNING AND EXECUTION BY A STAFF FAR REMOVED FROM THE BATTLE CAN BE DELETERIOUS."<sup>22</sup> THE AIR FORCE *PERCEIVED* THE PROBLEM TO BE OVER-CONTROLLING, BUT THE TERMS CHOSEN TO ADDRESS THE ISSUE CURIOUSLY FOCUSED ON EXECUTION. DESPITE THE MISUSE OF THE TERM, 'DECENTRALIZED EXECUTION' HAS BEEN IN EVERY VERSION OF AIR FORCE BASIC DOCTRINE SINCE 1971.

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<sup>20</sup> Air Force Manual 1-1, *United States Air Force Basic Doctrine*, 28 September 1971, 2-1.

<sup>21</sup> Air Force Manual 1-1, *Basic Aerospace Doctrine of the United States Air Force*, March 1992, 114.

<sup>22</sup> Air Force Doctrine Document 1, *Air Force Basic Doctrine*, 17 November 2003, 29.

IN THE 1975 AFM 1-1, THE AIR FORCE REVERTED BACK TO 'CENTRALIZED CONTROL' WITH "THE BASIC PRINCIPLES OF CENTRALIZED CONTROL, DECENTRALIZED EXECUTION, AND COORDINATED EFFORT ARE FUNDAMENTAL TO THE SUCCESS OF AEROSPACE OPERATIONS."<sup>23</sup> AGAIN, THERE WAS NO APPARENT TRIGGER FOR THE SWITCH OTHER THAN TRYING TO CLARIFY THE TERMINOLOGY INVOLVED.

THE 1979 VERSION OF AFM 1-1, *FUNCTIONS AND BASIC DOCTRINE OF THE UNITED STATES AIR FORCE*, SIGNIFICANTLY EXPANDED ON DECENTRALIZED EXECUTION. THE DOCUMENT STATED:

UNDER THE PRINCIPLE OF DECENTRALIZED EXECUTION, HIGHER ECHELONS OF COMMAND DEFINE MISSION AND TASKS, AND THEN DIRECT LOWER ECHELONS TO CONDUCT THE OPERATIONS...THIS HERITAGE PRODUCES LEADERS WHO ARE ABLE TO TRUST THE COMMANDERS AND INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS OF OUR ARMED FORCES TO MAKE GOOD DECISIONS AND TO PERFORM TO THE BEST OF THEIR ABILITIES. THIS IS AN ORGANIZATIONAL STRENGTH THAT MUST BE MAINTAINED. THIS ASPECT OF OUR NATIONAL CHARACTER MAKES POSSIBLE THE ACTION-AND-REACTION THAT IS NOT FOUND IN HIGHLY CENTRALIZED SOCIETIES. DECENTRALIZED EXECUTION ALLOWS FOR THE WIDER USE OF JUDGMENT IN EMPLOYING THE CAPABILITIES AND CHARACTERISTICS OF WARFARE SYSTEMS.<sup>24</sup>

THIS DESCRIPTION OF DECENTRALIZED EXECUTION FOCUSED ON MAXIMIZING AMERICAN INGENUITY AND TACTICAL FLEXIBILITY, WHEREAS THE DESCRIPTION FROM THE 1971 DOCTRINE FOCUSED ON THE OVERCENTRALIZATION OF CONTROL BY SENIOR LEADERS. THE FOCUS SHIFTED FROM CIVILIAN MICROMANAGEMENT TO DECENTRALIZING THE AIR FORCE'S OWN LEVELS OF LEADERSHIP.

HOWEVER, THIS EMPHASIS ON DECENTRALIZATION DID NOT RID THE AIR FORCE OF ALL CENTRALIZED CONTROL. AFTER ALL, THE AIR FORCE CONDUCTED TWO HIGHLY CENTRALIZED AIR POWER MISSIONS—NUCLEAR AND SPACE—DURING THIS PERIOD. THE NUCLEAR MISSION (AND ITS OWNER, STRATEGIC AIR COMMAND) RELIED HEAVILY ON AN 'EXECUTE' DECISION IN THE HANDS OF THE PRESIDENT, WITH ALL OF THE WIDELY DISPERSED SAC ELEMENTS MERELY FOLLOWING ORDERS TO THE LETTER. THE SPACE MISSION WAS ALSO HIGHLY 'CENTRALIZED' DUE TO THE EXTREME COSTS AND POLITICAL SENSITIVITY OF THESE PROGRAMS. BOTH OF THESE MISSIONS OPERATE TODAY UNDER THE SAME 'CLOSE CONTROL' ARRANGEMENTS AS IN 1979, PROVIDING VITAL CONTROL OVER NUCLEAR AND SPACE POWER. LOGICALLY, THE MASTER TENET DOES NOT APPLY TO EITHER.

IN THE 1992 VERSION OF AIR FORCE BASIC DOCTRINE, AUTHORS STRUGGLED TO CAPTURE THREE MAJOR CONTEXTUAL CHANGES IN THE EMPLOYMENT OF AIR POWER.<sup>25</sup> IN 1986, THE HISTORIC GOLDWATER-NICHOLS ACT (GNA) DICTATED THAT RESPONSIBILITY FOR FORCE EMPLOYMENT WOULD NOW BE ON THE SHOULDERS OF FUNCTIONAL COMMANDERS REPORTING TO AN OVERALL JOINT FORCE COMMANDER (JFC).<sup>26</sup> ONLY THREE YEARS AFTER THIS MONUMENTAL RESTRUCTURING OF THE ARMED

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<sup>23</sup> Air Force Manual 1-1, *United States Air Force Basic Doctrine*, 15 January 1975, 3-1.

<sup>24</sup> Air Force Manual 1-1, *Functions and Basic Doctrine of the United States Air Force*, 14 February 1979, 5-3.

<sup>25</sup> D. Robert Poyner, interviewed by author, 15 March 2005. Poyner is a civilian at the Air Force Doctrine Center, who authored the current and 1997 version of AFDD 1, *Air Force Basic Doctrine*.

<sup>26</sup> James R. Locher III, "Taking Stock of Goldwater-Nichols," *Joint Force Quarterly*, Autumn 1996, 13. Locher served as the assistant secretary of defense for special operations.



FORCES, THE BERLIN WALL FELL AND THE UNITED STATES WON THE COLD WAR. TWO YEARS LATER, THE UNITED STATES DECISIVELY ACHIEVED MILITARY OBJECTIVES IN SOUTHWEST ASIA BY REMOVING IRAQI DICTATOR SADDAM HUSSEIN AND HIS ARMIES FROM KUWAIT. THESE THREE EVENTS, COMBINED WITH WHAT SOME REFER TO AS A REVOLUTION IN MILITARY AFFAIRS REGARDING ENHANCED (BOTH TECHNOLOGICALLY AND ORGANIZATIONALLY) US CAPABILITY TO EXPLOIT ITS COMMAND AND CONTROL SYSTEM SUPERIORITY, OPENED THE DOOR FOR A NEW CHAPTER IN AIR POWER EMPLOYMENT.<sup>27</sup>

THE 1992 AFM 1-1 CLAIMED THAT THE JOINT FORCE AIR COMPONENT COMMANDER (JFACC) REPRESENTED THE IDEAL MECHANISM TO CENTRALIZE AIR POWER.

SINCE 1943 THE MOST VEXING CONTROL ISSUE HAS BEEN THE LEVEL AT WHICH CONTROL SHOULD BE CENTRALIZED, INCLUDING THE QUESTION AS TO WHETHER ALL AEROSPACE POWER (AIR FORCE, ARMY, NAVY, AND MARINE CORPS) SHOULD FALL UNDER A SINGLE AEROSPACE COMPONENT COMMANDER. TOO MUCH OR TOO LITTLE CENTRALIZATION HAS PROVEN TOO BE COUNTERPRODUCTIVE, THE FORMER DELAYING RESPONSIVENESS AND THE LATTER LEADING TO DISSIPATION OF EFFORT. BASED ON EXPERIENCE FROM WORLD WAR II, KOREA, VIETNAM, AND OPERATION DESERT STORM, THE MOST EFFECTIVE AND EFFICIENT SCHEME IS CONTROL OF ALL AEROSPACE ASSETS BY A SINGLE JOINT FORCE AIR COMPONENT COMMANDER RESPONSIBLE FOR INTEGRATING EMPLOYMENT OF ALL AEROSPACE FORCES WITHIN A THEATER OF OPERATIONS.<sup>28</sup>

THE JFACC SEEMED TO REPRESENT THE IDEAL POSITION TO PLACE CENTRALIZED CONTROL, BUT DID NOTHING TO ADDRESS THE ISSUE OF 'TOO MUCH OR TOO LITTLE CENTRALIZATION.' THE LEVEL OF CONTROL WAS TO BE DETERMINED BY THE JFACC ACCORDING TO THE SITUATION AT HAND. AS JFACC IN DESERT STORM, GENERAL CHUCK HORNER USED AN AOC AND AN AIR TASKING ORDER (ATO) TO INTRODUCE NEW CONTROL MECHANISMS THAT COULD AFFECT WHAT DOCTRINE REFERS TO AS 'EXECUTION.' WHILE NOT 'EXECUTING' ANY SPECIFIC MISSIONS FROM THE AOC ITSELF, THE JFACC COULD NOW CLOSELY CONTROL CERTAIN AIR POWER MISSIONS.

AFM 1-1 RECOGNIZED THE GROWING CONFUSION OVER DECENTRALIZED EXECUTION, ADMITTING THAT IT RAISED "SOME THORNY PROBLEMS." THE DOCUMENT STATED:

MODERN TECHNOLOGIES SEEM TO MAKE DECENTRALIZATION OF MANY IMPORTANT DECISIONS INCREASINGLY INAPPROPRIATE OR EVEN UNNECESSARY. THE COMPLEXITIES OF "FORCE PACKAGING" REQUIRE THAT MANY DECISIONS CONCERNING TARGETS, ROUTING, FORCE COMPOSITION, AND TACTICS BE MADE AT A RELATIVELY HIGH LEVEL.<sup>29</sup>

THIS HINTED THAT THE BIRTH OF THE AOC MIGHT EQUAL THE DEATH OF THE DECENTRALIZED EXECUTION. THE AOC CHANGED THE FOCUS FROM TACTICAL FLEXIBILITY TO OPERATIONAL FLEXIBILITY. EVEN THOUGH THIS SHIFT IN FOCUS FRUSTRATED SOME OPERATORS, FLEXIBILITY AT THE OPERATIONAL LEVEL OF WAR PROVED VERY USEFUL. NEVERTHELESS, THE DOCUMENT WARNED:

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<sup>27</sup> Poyner interview; William A. Owens with Ed Offley, *Lifting the Fog of War* (Baltimore, Md.: The John Hopkins University Press, 2001), 15-6.

<sup>28</sup> AFM 1-1, 1992, 114.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 115.

STILL, SUCCESS IN WAR AT THE TACTICAL LEVEL REQUIRES ATTENTION TO DETAILS AND THE ABILITY TO ADAPT QUICKLY TO EXPLOIT FLEETING OPPORTUNITIES. ALTHOUGH CENTRALIZED CONTROL CAN EFFECTIVELY CONCENTRATE AEROSPACE POWER WITHIN A CAMPAIGN, COMMANDERS EXERCISING SUCH CONTROL ARE LIKELY TO BE FACED WITH TOO MANY UNITS AND TOO LITTLE TIME IF THEY TRY TO MASTER THE DETAILS NECESSARY TO MAKE TIMELY ADJUSTMENTS FOR TACTICAL EFFECTIVENESS.<sup>30</sup>

HOWEVER, IF A COMMANDER COULD EFFECTIVELY MAKE THESE TIMELY ADJUSTMENTS, THEN THE AOC WOULD ESSENTIALLY OVERRIDE THE NEED FOR 'DECENTRALIZED EXECUTION.'

SENSING THE IMPENDING DEBATE, DOCTRINE WRITERS DEFINED 'DECENTRALIZED EXECUTION' IN THE NEXT REVISION. IN 1997, AIR FORCE DOCTRINE DOCUMENT 1, *AIR FORCE BASIC DOCTRINE*, DEFINED DECENTRALIZED EXECUTION AS, "DELEGATION OF EXECUTION AUTHORITY TO RESPONSIBLE AND CAPABLE LOWER-LEVEL COMMANDER IS ESSENTIAL TO ACHIEVE EFFECTIVE SPAN OF CONTROL AND TO FOSTER INITIATIVE, SITUATIONAL RESPONSIVENESS, AND TACTICAL FLEXIBILITY."<sup>31</sup> IT THEN, CURIOUSLY, OFFERED DESERT STORM AS THE EXAMPLE OF DECENTRALIZED EXECUTION.

CENTRALIZED CONTROL AND DECENTRALIZED EXECUTION WERE ILLUSTRATED BY THE 2,000-3,000 SORTIES A DAY IN THE GULF WAR. THE SINGLE COMMAND INTENT OF THE JFC WAS CENTRALLY PLANNED AND THEN DISTRIBUTED AND EXECUTED ACROSS AN ENTIRE THEATER BATTLESPACE BY OVER 500 FLIGHT LEADS; MISSION, CREW, AND FLIGHT COMMANDERS; AND SUPPORT TEAMS IN A CONTINUOUS APPLICATION AGAINST AN ENTIRE RANGE OF SEPARATELY ENGAGING, THINKING, REACTING ENEMIES.<sup>32</sup>

THESE SAME WORDS COULD DESCRIBE CENTRALIZED EXECUTION (OR CLOSE CONTROL). HOWEVER, AFTER GEN MICHAEL RYAN, JFACC FOR OPERATION DELIBERATE FORCE IN 1995, PLANNED ALL TACTICAL DETAILS DOWN TO THE LOWEST LEVEL, HE WAS ACCUSED OF CENTRALLY EXECUTING INSTEAD OF CENTRALLY CONTROLLING OPERATIONS.<sup>33</sup> IT MAY HAVE BEEN TOO SOON TO INCORPORATE THE LESSONS LEARNED FROM A SINGLE CONFLICT INTO DOCTRINE. AFTER A SIMILAR SCENARIO OCCURRED DURING OPERATION ALLIED FORCE IN 1999, DOCTRINE WRITERS CHOSE TO ADDRESS CENTRALIZED EXECUTION.

#### **CURRENT AIR FORCE DOCTRINE**

THE CURRENT VERSION (2003) OF AFDD 1 STATES THAT CENTRALIZED EXECUTION MAY IN FACT BE NECESSARY, WHILE AT THE SAME TIME STILL MAINTAINING THE PRIMACY OF DECENTRALIZED EXECUTION. THE TEXT AGAIN MERGED SIMILAR WORDS TOGETHER AND ADDED TO THE CONFUSION.

BASIC DOCTRINE BEGINS WITH A REHASH OF PAST DOCTRINE, AND THEN STATES THAT CENTRALIZED CONTROL, NOT DECENTRALIZED EXECUTION, MAXIMIZES FLEXIBILITY.

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Air Force Doctrine Document 1, *Air Force Basic Doctrine*, September 1997, 73.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 23.

<sup>33</sup> Robert C. Owen, *Deliberate Force: A Case Study in Effective Air Campaigning* (Maxwell AFB, Ala.: Air University Press, 2000), 433-4.

CENTRALIZED CONTROL MAXIMIZES THE FLEXIBILITY AND EFFECTIVENESS OF AIR AND SPACE POWER; HOWEVER, IT MUST NOT BECOME A RECIPE FOR MICROMANAGEMENT, STIFLING THE INITIATIVE SUBORDINATES NEED TO DEAL WITH COMBAT'S INEVITABLE UNCERTAINTIES.<sup>34</sup>

DECENTRALIZED EXECUTION FOCUSES ON SPAN OF CONTROL AND TACTICAL FLEXIBILITY.

DECENTRALIZED EXECUTION OF AIR AND SPACE POWER IS THE DELEGATION OF EXECUTION AUTHORITY TO RESPONSIBLE AND CAPABLE LOWER-LEVEL COMMANDERS TO ACHIEVE EFFECTIVE SPAN OF CONTROL AND TO FOSTER DISCIPLINED INITIATIVE, SITUATIONAL RESPONSIVENESS, AND TACTICAL FLEXIBILITY. IT ALLOWS SUBORDINATES TO EXPLOIT OPPORTUNITIES IN RAPIDLY CHANGING, FLUID SITUATIONS.<sup>35</sup>

HOWEVER, THE CAPABILITIES INHERENT TO THE AOC HAVE EFFECTIVELY BROADENED A JFACC'S SPAN OF CONTROL FAR PAST WHAT ONE HUMAN COULD CONTROL WITHOUT TECHNOLOGY. IN ADDITION, THE AOC RAISES TACTICAL FLEXIBILITY TO OPERATIONAL FLEXIBILITY, AS THE TEXT CONFIRMS.

CENTRALIZED CONTROL AND DECENTRALIZED EXECUTION OF AIR AND SPACE POWER PROVIDE THEATER-WIDE FOCUS WHILE ALLOWING **OPERATIONAL FLEXIBILITY** TO MEET THEATER OBJECTIVES. THEY ASSURE CONCENTRATION OF EFFORT WHILE MAINTAINING ECONOMY OF FORCE. THEY EXPLOIT AIR AND SPACE POWER'S VERSATILITY AND FLEXIBILITY TO ENSURE THAT AIR AND SPACE FORCES REMAIN RESPONSIVE, SURVIVABLE, AND SUSTAINABLE.<sup>36</sup> [EMPHASIS ADDED]

THE ADDITION OF THE TERM 'OPERATIONAL FLEXIBILITY' TO DOCTRINE IN 2003 CONFIRMED THAT OPERATIONAL FLEXIBILITY WAS MORE DESIRABLE THAN TACTICAL FLEXIBILITY. IN TURN, TACTICAL FLEXIBILITY WAS NO LONGER SEEN AS A REQUIREMENT FOR THE EFFECTIVE EMPLOYMENT OF AIR POWER.

THE SECTION CONCLUDED WITH THE MOST ENLIGHTENING PORTION AS TO WHY SOMEONE MIGHT WANT TO CENTRALLY EXECUTE OR CLOSELY CONTROL OPERATIONS. AFDD 1 INCORPORATED NEW TERMS THAT TRULY DESCRIBES THE ISSUE—STRATEGIC EFFECTIVENESS AND TACTICAL EFFICIENCY.

NEVERTHELESS, IN SOME SITUATIONS, THERE MAY BE VALID REASONS FOR EXECUTION OF SPECIFIC OPERATIONS AT HIGHER LEVELS, MOST NOTABLY WHEN THE JFC (OR PERHAPS EVEN HIGHER AUTHORITIES) MAY **WISH TO CONTROL STRATEGIC EFFECTS, EVEN AT THE SACRIFICE OF TACTICAL EFFICIENCY.**<sup>37</sup> [EMPHASIS ADDED]

THIS DESIRE TO ACHIEVE STRATEGIC EFFECTIVENESS AT THE SACRIFICE OF TACTICAL EFFICIENCY SERVES AS A POINT OF DEPARTURE FROM PAST AIR POWER EMPLOYMENT. PREVIOUSLY, TACTICAL EFFICIENCY—MAXIMIZING AIR POWER RESOURCES TO CREATE THE GREATEST TOTAL NUMBER OF EFFECTS POSSIBLE—WAS THE KEY TO ACHIEVING STRATEGIC EFFECTIVENESS, BUT THIS IS NO LONGER THE CASE. THIS UNIQUE CHANGE IN THE NATURE OF US WARFARE INCREASES THE NEED FOR CLOSE CONTROL.

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<sup>34</sup> AFDD 1, 2003, 28.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 29.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 29-30.

## **CONCLUSION**

THE AIR FORCE HAS STRUGGLED TO PRECISELY CODIFY ITS BEST PRACTICES REGARDING THE EMPLOYMENT OF AIR POWER. CONFUSION OVER TERMS HAS EXISTED FOR DECADES, AS EVIDENCED BY THE REVERSAL OF 'CENTRALIZED CONTROL' IN 1953 AND ITS RE-ADOPTION IN 1975. IN ADDITION, THE TERM 'DECENTRALIZED EXECUTION' WAS A POOR CHOICE OF WORDS IN 1971 AND CONTINUES TO SERVE AS THE FOUNDATION FOR CONFUSION THAT STILL EXISTS TODAY. THIS CONFUSION SUGGESTS THE NEED TO MOVE PAST THE TERMS OF 'CONTROL' AND 'EXECUTION' TOWARD MORE ACCURATE DIRECTION FOR THE EMPLOYMENT OF AIR POWER.

ON THE POSITIVE SIDE, ONE CONCEPT—THE NEED FOR TACTICAL FLEXIBILITY—HAS BEEN 'DOCTRINALLY' CONSISTENT UNTIL ONLY RECENTLY. WITH THE ADVENT OF THE AOC CAME AN INCREASED FOCUS ON MAINTAINING OPERATIONAL FLEXIBILITY OVER TACTICAL FLEXIBILITY. FLEXIBILITY AT THE OPERATIONAL LEVEL OF WAR ALLOWS THE JFACC TO RETAIN THE FLEXIBILITY TO REACT TO AND OVERCOME DYNAMIC SITUATIONS. A JFACC'S DESIRE TO ACHIEVE STRATEGIC EFFECTS MAY CONTINUE TO REQUIRE CLOSE CONTROL OF TACTICAL DETAILS. THIS WILL ASSUREDLY REDUCE THE NEED FOR TACTICAL EFFICIENCY AND CONTINUE TO FRUSTRATE OPERATORS IF NOT PROPERLY UNDERSTOOD.

## CHAPTER 2

### CONTEXTUAL FACTORS

*AND SO I TOLD THE CLASS AT AIR COMMAND AND STAFF COLLEGE THAT THE BEST THING THAT THEY COULD DO IN LOOKING AT THE CHANGING RULES OF AIR WARFARE WAS TO REMEMBER TO THINK ABOUT THEM. THAT THERE WAS NO ONE SET OF RULES. THAT THESE WERE GUIDELINES AND PRINCIPLES. BUT THAT THERE WAS NO ONE TEMPLATE THAT WOULD ALWAYS APPLY TO EVERY SITUATION.*

*--DR REBECCA GRANT, 2003*

IN HER 2003 REMARKS AT THE AIR FORCE ASSOCIATION (AFA) NATIONAL SYMPOSIUM, DR REBECCA GRANT, PRESIDENT AND FOUNDER OF IRIS INDEPENDENT RESEARCH COMPANY AND AUTHOR OF *THE FIRST 600 DAYS OF COMBAT: THE US AIR FORCE IN THE GLOBAL WAR ON TERRORISM*, SPOKE ON THE TENSION BETWEEN CENTRALIZATION AND DECENTRALIZATION. HER REMARKS AT THE AFA SYMPOSIUM ECHOED A SIMILAR MESSAGE FROM AN EARLIER AIR COMMAND AND STAFF COLLEGE (ACSC) LECTURE, THE IDEA THAT “CENTRALIZED CONTROL IS BEGINNING TO TURN INTO SOMETHING CALLED CENTRALIZED EXECUTION.” SHE CONCLUDED HER SPEECH BY PREDICTING THAT THE “TENSION OF CENTRALIZATION AND DECENTRALIZATION WILL BE WITH US FOR A LONG TIME.”<sup>38</sup> THIS CHAPTER EXPLAINS WHY THIS DOES NOT HAVE TO BE THE CASE.

THIS CHAPTER IDENTIFIES THREE REASONS BEHIND THE INCREASING TENSION BETWEEN THE DOCTRINE OF DECENTRALIZED EXECUTION AND THE REALITY OF CLOSE CONTROL. THREE CONTEXTUAL FACTORS—IMPROVEMENTS IN TECHNOLOGY, INCREASED POLITICAL INFLUENCE REGARDING THE USE OF MILITARY FORCE, AND THE CHANGING NATURE OF TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY US WARFARE—ENCOURAGE TACTICAL MEDDLING. THE TENSION THAT DR GRANT REFERS TO CAN BE REDUCED THROUGH AN UNDERSTANDING OF THESE CONTEXTUAL FACTORS AND THE REALIZATION THAT SENIOR LEADER INVOLVEMENT INTO TACTICAL OPERATIONS SHOULD BE EXPECTED IN FUTURE CONFLICTS.

#### TECHNOLOGY

TECHNOLOGY IS THE PRIMARY ENABLER OF CENTRALIZED EXECUTION. THE TECHNOLOGICAL CAPABILITIES EMBEDDED IN THE AOC HAVE LED TO THE ABILITY OF SENIOR AIR FORCE LEADERS TO NOT ONLY MONITOR TACTICAL OPERATIONS, BUT TO INTERVENE AS WELL. EVEN THOUGH TECHNOLOGY HAS INCREASED MILITARY CAPABILITY, BASIC WARFARE REMAINS UNCHANGED. IN CLAUSEWITZIAN TERMS, THE LOGIC OF WAR REMAINS CONSTANT; ONLY THE GRAMMAR OF WAR CHANGES.<sup>39</sup> AS AIR FORCE BASIC DOCTRINE STATES, “DESPITE TECHNOLOGICAL ADVANCES AND THE BEST OF PLANS AND INTENTIONS, WAR WILL NEVER BE AS STRAIGHTFORWARD IN EXECUTION AS WE PLANNED, NOR FREE OF UNINTENDED

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<sup>38</sup> Rebecca Grant, Remarks at the Air Force Association Symposium, Orlando, FL, 14 February 2003.

<sup>39</sup> Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, ed. and trans. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1976), 605.

CONSEQUENCES. THE MEANS MAY CHANGE, BUT THE FUNDAMENTAL CHARACTER AND RISKS OF WARFARE WILL REMAIN.”<sup>40</sup> TECHNOLOGY WILL SIGNIFICANTLY ALTER THE GRAMMAR OF WAR FOR YEARS TO COME.

ONE TECHNOLOGICAL ADVANCE STARTED THIS DEBATE FOR AVIATORS—RADAR. DEVELOPED IN THE 1930S TO PROTECT ENGLAND FROM AERIAL ATTACK FROM THE SOUTH, THE BRITISH ESTABLISHED OVER 57 ‘CHAIN HOME’ SITES FOR CONTINUOUS COVERAGE ALONG THE SOUTHERN BORDER. THIS INEVITABLY LED TO THE FIRST OPERATORS COMPLAINING THAT THE CONTROLLERS WERE “CRAMPING THE CHERISHED INITIATIVE AND FREEDOM OF ACTION OF THE FIGHTER PILOT.”<sup>41</sup> THE STRUGGLE FOR CONTROL OF TACTICAL OPERATIONS BETWEEN LEADERS AND OPERATORS HAD BEGUN.

THE AIR OPERATIONS CENTER IS NOW THE FOCUS OF THIS STRUGGLE OVER TACTICAL CONTROL. IN THE AOC, TECHNOLOGY ENABLES THE JFACC TO PROVIDE CLOSE CONTROL OVER TACTICAL OPERATIONS. THROUGH INCREASED COMMUNICATION CAPABILITY, AOC ‘CONTROLLERS’ CAN TELL AN OPERATOR EXACTLY HOW TO DO THE MISSION—WHAT RUN-IN HEADING, WHAT ALTITUDE, WHAT TARGET, WHAT DESIRED MEAN POINT OF IMPACT, AND WHAT EGRESS ROUTING, WHAT TIME OVER TARGET, WHAT WEAPON TO USE—WHEREAS THE OPERATOR MAY PREFER TO DETERMINE ALL OF THESE THINGS AT THE UNIT LEVEL. TECHNOLOGY ALLOWS AOC PERSONNEL TO PROVIDE THIS INFORMATION (EITHER IN PLANNING OR THROUGH REAL-TIME CONTROLLING) TO THE TACTICAL OPERATOR FOR IMPLEMENTATION.

TECHNOLOGY NOT ONLY ENABLES CLOSE CONTROL, BUT ALSO ENABLES THE NEXT LOGICAL STEP—‘TRUE’ CENTRALIZED EXECUTION. IF WHAT AIR POWER LEADERS HAVE CONSIDERED CENTRALIZED EXECUTION IS ACTUALLY CLOSE CONTROL, THEN IS THERE SUCH A THING AS CENTRALIZED EXECUTION? THE ANSWER IS YES, AND THIS ISSUE, ONCE IT SURFACES, COULD BE POTENTIALLY MORE CONTROVERSIAL THAN THE CURRENT DOCTRINAL ‘CENTRALIZED EXECUTION’ DEBATE. ‘TRUE’ CENTRALIZED EXECUTION IS PHYSICALLY PULLING THE TRIGGER ON WEAPONS FROM THE AOC, PRESUMABLY BY THE JFACC. THIS DEFINITION CLEARLY SEPARATES THE EASILY IDENTIFIABLE ACT OF EXECUTION FROM THE NEBULOUS TERM, EXECUTION AUTHORITY, OFFERED IN THE DOCTRINAL INTERPRETATION OF CENTRALIZED EXECUTION.

CURRENTLY THERE ARE NO PURE EXAMPLES OF ‘TRUE’ CENTRALIZED EXECUTION WHERE THE JFACC IS THE ONE PULLING THE TRIGGER; HOWEVER, THE TECHNOLOGICAL CAPABILITY TO DO SO DOES EXIST. THIS CAPABILITY CURRENTLY RESIDES OUTSIDE OF THE THEATER AT THE PREDATOR OPERATIONS CENTER IN NEVADA WHERE OPERATORS FIRE MISSILES OFF THEIR UAVS FROM THOUSANDS OF MILES AWAY. IF THE CAPABILITY EXISTS TO PULL THE TRIGGER IN THEATER FROM NEVADA, THEN THE CAPABILITY EXISTS TO PULL THE TRIGGER IN THEATER FROM ANY POINT OF ONE’S CHOOSING, INCLUDING THE AOC, REGARDLESS OF ITS LOCATION. THE AIR FORCE WILL INDEED HAVE A ‘TRUE’ CENTRALIZED EXECUTION DILEMMA ON ITS HANDS IF THIS BECOMES THE NEW NORM.

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<sup>40</sup> Air Force Doctrine Document 1, *Air Force Basic Doctrine*, 17 November 2003, 14.

<sup>41</sup> Robert Watson-Watt, *The Pulse of Radar* (New York: The Dial Press, 1959), 55-9, 115.

THE PREDATOR UAV IS BUT ONE SMALL STEP CLOSER TOWARD THE FUTURE OF WARFARE. TECHNOLOGY WILL SOON ALLOW THE AOC TO EXECUTE NOT ONLY FROM UNMANNED SYSTEMS, BUT FROM MANNED SYSTEMS AS WELL. A PILOT COULD BE FLYING A MISSION, WHEN SOMEONE AT THE AOC COULD FLIP A SWITCH, TAKE CONTROL OF THE AIRCRAFT, EXECUTE A PORTION OF THE MISSION, AND RETURN THE AIRCRAFT TO THE OPERATOR. THEREFORE, TAKEN TO THE THEORETICAL ABSOLUTE, A JFACC COULD EXECUTE THE ENTIRE AIR WAR FROM THE AOC BY SENDING SIGNALS TO AIRPLANES TO ACHIEVE THEIR EFFECTS OVERRIDING THE OPERATORS ONBOARD. TECHNOLOGICAL ADVANCES MAY MAKE 'TRUE' CENTRALIZED EXECUTION COMMON IN THE YEARS TO COME.

IF FULLY IMPLEMENTED, NETWORK-CENTRIC WARFARE (NCW) WILL ALSO INCREASE THE ABILITY FOR SENIOR LEADERS TO CONTROL TACTICAL AFFAIRS. THE PROMISE OF NCW IS TO DELIVER ALL OF THE AVAILABLE INFORMATION IN A USEABLE FORMAT TO THE WARFIGHTER. RETIRED ADMIRAL ARTHUR K. CEBROWSKI, DIRECTOR OF THE OFFICE OF FORCE TRANSFORMATION, PERPETUATES THIS PROMISE WITH, "WHEN IMPLEMENTED, IT TAKES FULL ADVANTAGE OF THE TRUST WE PLACE IN OUR JUNIOR AND NONCOMMISSIONED OFFICERS. AS INFORMATION MOVES DOWN ECHELON, SO DOES DECISION-MAKING."<sup>42</sup> HOWEVER, WHAT IS RARELY MENTIONED IS THAT THE COMMUNICATION CONDUIT THAT DELIVERS ALL OF THIS RELEVANT INFORMATION TO EACH WARFIGHTER CAN ALSO DELIVER INFORMATION FROM EACH WARFIGHTER BACK TO THE AOC. RETIRED ADMIRAL WILLIAM A. OWENS, PREVIOUS VICE CHAIRMAN OF THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF, RECOGNIZED THE CAPABILITY THAT NCW WILL GIVE TO COMMANDERS. IN HIS BOOK, *LIFTING THE FOG OF WAR*, HE STATES, "MOST IMPORTANT, THE GENERAL OR ADMIRAL WILL BE ABLE TO IMMEDIATELY RELAY HIS ORDERS (AND THE INFORMATION THAT SUPPORTS THEM) TO HIS SUBORDINATE COMMANDER THROUGH A COMPUTER NETWORK THAT INCLUDES VIDEO TELECONFERENCING."<sup>43</sup> A JFACC, WHO HAS MORE OPERATIONAL LEVEL SITUATIONAL AWARENESS THAN THE WARFIGHTER, MAY ACTUALLY KNOW JUST AS MUCH, THANKS TO TECHNOLOGY, AS THE WARFIGHTER ABOUT THE TACTICAL SITUATION AS WELL.

HOWEVER, TECHNOLOGY ALONE IS NOT THE WHOLE EQUATION; THE FACT REMAINS THAT HARD DECISIONS TAKE TIME. GENERAL JOHN JUMPER, AIR FORCE CHIEF OF STAFF, IS FOND OF SAYING "WE NEED A ROBUST, TIME CRITICAL TARGETING CAPABILITY THAT TURNS OUR RESPONSE TO EMERGING TARGETS FROM HOURS TODAY INTO MINUTES IN THE FUTURE."<sup>44</sup> HOWEVER, TECHNOLOGICAL IMPROVEMENTS IN THE FIND, FIX, TARGET, TRACK, ENGAGE, AND ASSESS (F2T2EA) CYCLE CAN ONLY SHORTEN THE PROCESS SO MUCH. OEF, ACCORDING TO ANTHONY CORDESMAN, SHOWED THAT DECISION TIME WAS THE "LONG POLE IN THE TENT."<sup>45</sup> DECISION MAKERS MUST HAVE CONFIDENCE IN THE

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<sup>42</sup> Arthur K. Cebrowski, *The Implementation of Network-Centric Warfare*, Office of Force Transformation, 10 January 2005, ii.

<sup>43</sup> William A. Owens with Ed Offley, *Lifting the Fog of War* (Baltimore, Md.: The John Hopkins University Press, 2001), 15.

<sup>44</sup> Leonard LaVella, "Operation Enduring Freedom Time Sensitive Targeting Process Study," Air Combat Command Analysis Division, Directorate of Requirements, 25 August 2003, 1.

<sup>45</sup> ANTHONY H. CORDESMAN, *THE LESSONS OF AFGHANISTAN: WAR FIGHTING, INTELLIGENCE, AND FORCE TRANSFORMATION* (WASHINGTON, D.C.: THE CSIS PRESS, 2002), 110.

INFORMATION THEY RECEIVE, ACCEPT THE INHERENT RISK INVOLVED, THINK THROUGH THE PROBLEM, AND THEN APPROVE ACTION. ODDLY, WITH THE INCREASE IN OUR TECHNOLOGICAL CAPABILITY, THERE ARE SITUATIONS WHEN THE TIME REQUIRED TO MAKE A DECISION IS ACTUALLY LONGER, AS THE DECISION MAKER ASSUMES AN EVEN BETTER PIECE OF INFORMATION IS ONLY MOMENTS AWAY. CLAUSEWITZ DESCRIBES TWO QUALITIES THAT ARE INDISPENSABLE FOR DEALING WITH UNCERTAINTY—*COUP D’OEIL* AND DETERMINATION. *COUP D’OEIL*, COMMONLY TRANSLATED AS ‘THE INWARD EYE,’ PROVIDES THE SENSE OF WHAT TO DO AND DETERMINATION IS THE COURAGE TO ACT WITH IMPERFECT INFORMATION, EVEN AT THE STRATEGIC LEVEL.<sup>46</sup> THIS DETERMINATION TO ACT, INSTEAD OF WAITING FOR MORE INFORMATION, WILL DRIVE THE F2T2EA CYCLE IN THE FUTURE.

TECHNOLOGY MINIMIZES ALL OF THE F2T2EA CYCLE STEPS EXCEPT FOR THE DECISION-MAKING TIME TAKEN BY THE DECISION MAKER. HOWEVER, THROUGH INCREASED COMMUNICATIONS CAPABILITY AND STREAMING INTELLIGENCE, SURVEILLANCE, AND RECONNAISSANCE INPUTS INTO THE AOC, TECHNOLOGY ALLOWS THE DECISION MAKER TO HAVE AN INCREASING AMOUNT OF REAL-TIME INFORMATION. THIS MAY ALSO ALLOW THE DECISION MAKER TO SHORTEN THE DECISION-MAKING TIME AS WELL. NCW PROMISES TO GET THE RIGHT INFORMATION TO THE RIGHT LEVEL, INCREASING DECISION-MAKING ABILITY AND DECISION DISSEMINATION FUNCTIONS CRITICAL TO CLOSE CONTROL.

## **POLITICAL INFLUENCE**

POLITICAL INFLUENCE ON MILITARY OPERATIONS IS THE SECOND FACTOR THAT DRIVES LEADERS TO INCREASE THEIR PERSONAL INVOLVEMENT IN TACTICAL OPERATIONS. BECAUSE OF THE *RAPIDITY* WITH WHICH TACTICAL EVENTS CAN HAVE STRATEGIC IMPACT, A TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY LEADER RESPONSIBLE FOR THE STRATEGIC SITUATION MAY CHOOSE TO CLOSELY CONTROL EVENTS AT THE TACTICAL LEVEL. WARS ARE, AND ALWAYS HAVE BEEN, POLITICAL. CLAUSEWITZ TAUGHT THAT WARFARE IS SIMPLY AN EXTENSION OF POLITICS BY OTHER MEANS.<sup>47</sup> HOWEVER, THE SPECIFIC CONTEXTUAL CHANGE THAT MOST INFLUENCES THE UNITED STATES THESE DAYS IS THE VAST ARRAY OF POLITICAL FACTORS THAT AFFECT DECISION MAKERS. AS ELIOT COHEN, IN *SUPREME COMMAND*, EMPHASIZES, “IT IS SOMETIMES FORGOTTEN JUST HOW DEEP AND PERVASIVE POLITICAL CONSIDERATIONS IN WAR ARE.”<sup>48</sup>

THIS TEXT USES POLITICAL INFLUENCE AS A CATCHALL PHRASE TO DESCRIBE THE OVERALL IMPACT OF POLITICAL FORCES ON DECISION-MAKING. POLITICAL INFLUENCE IS IMMEASURABLE IN CONCRETE TERMS, HAS MANY ASPECTS, AND CAN BE VASTLY DIFFERENT TO EACH INDIVIDUAL. A FEW EXAMPLES OF POLITICAL CONSIDERATIONS ARE: VITAL INTERESTS VERSUS PERIPHERAL INTERESTS, HIGH VERSUS LOW STAKES, DOMESTIC OPINION, INTERNATIONAL OPINION, COALITION COHESION, COLLATERAL DAMAGE, CIVILIAN CASUALTIES, MILITARY CASUALTIES, LIMITED OBJECTIVES, HOST NATION FRICTION, FISCAL CONSTRAINTS, AND ELECTION YEAR CYCLES. THE CRITICAL PIECE TO MY ARGUMENT IS THAT

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<sup>46</sup> Clausewitz, 102-3.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 87.

<sup>48</sup> Eliot A. Cohen, *Supreme Command: Soldiers, Statesmen, and Leadership in Wartime* (New York, N.Y.: Anchor Books, 2002), 129.



POLITICAL INFLUENCE IS WHAT THE SENIOR DECISION MAKERS *PERCEIVE* IT TO BE. THIS PERCEPTION, RATHER THAN ABJECT REALITY, SHAPES EACH LEADER'S DECISION-MAKING PROCESS AND SUBSEQUENTLY DETERMINES THE LEVEL OF INVOLVEMENT HE OR SHE CHOOSES TO EXERT OVER TACTICAL OPERATIONS.<sup>49</sup> EVEN IF AN EVENT IS UNLIKELY, THE SEVERITY OF THE POTENTIAL CONSEQUENCES DRIVES POLITICAL INFLUENCE.<sup>50</sup> IF ONE EVENT CAN SACK A STRATEGY, THEN IT SHOULD RECEIVE HIGH-LEVEL CONTROL.

THE "CNN-EFFECT" MAGNIFIES EXISTING POLITICAL SENSITIVITY BY DIRECTLY INFLUENCING PUBLIC OPINION, AND IN TURN, DECISION MAKERS. THE PHRASE ORIGINATED WITH PRESIDENT GEORGE H. W. BUSH'S DECISION TO SEND TROOPS INTO SOMALIA AFTER VIEWING FOOTAGE OF STARVING REFUGEES. PRESIDENT WILLIAM CLINTON'S EXIT FROM SOMALIA LESS THAN A YEAR LATER DEMONSTRATED THE NEGATIVE IMPACT THE CNN-EFFECT CAN HAVE ON MILITARY OPERATIONS BY BRINGING WAR'S MALICE INTO AMERICAN LIVING ROOMS.<sup>51</sup> AUDIENCES CAN NOW WITNESS WARTIME ACTIONS UNFOLDING REAL-TIME, LEADING DIRECTLY TO NEGATIVE PUBLICITY OF AIR POWER MISTAKES, SUCH AS THE ACCIDENTAL CHINESE EMBASSY BOMBING IN KOSOVO IN 1999.<sup>52</sup> WHEREAS ANY TACTICAL EVENT COULD ALWAYS HAVE STRATEGIC IMPACT, THE SHORTENED TIME FACTOR FROM THE EVENT TO IMPACT, ENABLED BY THE MEDIA, INCREASES POLITICAL INFLUENCE. MICHAEL IGNATIEFF, AUTHOR OF *VIRTUAL WAR: KOSOVO AND BEYOND*, WARNS THAT, "WHEN WAR BECOMES A SPECTATOR SPORT, THE MEDIA BECOMES THE DECISIVE THEATER OF OPERATIONS."<sup>53</sup>

THE HEGEMONIC STATUS OF THE UNITED STATES IS ALSO POLITICALLY CONSTRAINING. PRECISION CAPABILITY CREATES PRECISION EXPECTATIONS AND OVERWHELMING US MILITARY CAPABILITY FORCES SENIOR LEADERS TO WORRY ABOUT POLITICAL ISSUES—INTERNATIONAL AND DOMESTIC OPINION, COALITION COHESION, COLLATERAL DAMAGE, AND CASUALTY MINIMIZATION, FOR EXAMPLE—THAT WOULD SIMPLY NOT CONCERN A SENIOR LEADER FIGHTING FOR SURVIVAL. IGNATIEFF REFERS TO THIS TYPE OF WARFARE AS "LEGAL WAR" WHICH "WHEN LINKED TO PRECISION WEAPONRY AND TARGETING, CREATES AN EXPECTATION, WHICH MILITARY, PUBLIC, AND POLITICIANS ALIKE COME TO SHARE, THAT WAR CAN BE CLEAN AND MISTAKE FREE."<sup>54</sup> BOTH INTERNATIONAL AND DOMESTIC OPINION HINGES ON THE ABILITY TO MINIMIZE BOTH CASUALTIES AND COLLATERAL DAMAGE WHILE PROSECUTING A WAR. MOREOVER, EACH NEW CONFLICT IS INCREASINGLY DIFFICULT TO JUSTIFY. AS THE HEGEMON, THE UNITED STATES MUST 'SPIN' ITS CASE TO ITS PUBLIC AND TO THE WORLD, WHEN CHOOSING MILITARY FORCE OVER PEACEFUL INSTRUMENTS OF POWER.<sup>55</sup> FOR THE UNITED STATES, WARS ARE RARELY

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<sup>49</sup> Stephen Biddle, *Military Power: Explaining Victory and Defeat in Modern Battle* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2004), 193.

<sup>50</sup> James Mann, *Rise of the Vulcans: The History of Bush's War Cabinet* (New York, N.Y.: Penguin Books, 2004), 81-2.

<sup>51</sup> Margaret H. Belknap, "The CNN Effect: Strategic Enabler or Operational Risk," *Proceedings*, US Army War College Quarterly, Autumn 2002, 100.

<sup>52</sup> Michael Ignatieff, *Virtual War: Kosovo and Beyond* (New York, N.Y.: Picador USA, 2001), 198.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 191.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 198.

<sup>55</sup> Ignatieff, 196.

ABOUT NATIONAL SURVIVAL, AND WITHOUT THE MOST VITAL NATIONAL INTEREST AT STAKE, WAR “LOSES ITS RESERVOIR OF SUPPORT AMONG CITIZENS.”<sup>56</sup> POLITICAL INFLUENCE DRIVES US SENIOR LEADERS TO CLOSELY CONTROL TACTICAL EVENTS TO AVOID OR AT LEAST MINIMIZE NEGATIVE CONSEQUENCES OF THE USE OF MILITARY FORCE.

ALSO AS A FUNCTION OF ITS OVERWHELMING POWER, THE UNITED STATES IN RECENT CONFLICTS HAS CHOSEN TO FIGHT ENEMIES WITHIN STATES AS OPPOSED TO ENTIRE STATES. THE UNITED STATES “FIGHTS WARS AGAINST INDIVIDUALS TODAY, NOT COUNTRIES, OR SOCIETIES, OR EVEN GOVERNMENTS AS A WHOLE” BY GOING AFTER “BAD GUYS, USING WEAPONS WITH A REAL MORAL DIMENSION, SUCH AS SMART BOMBS AND NEW NONLETHAL FORMS OF WARFARE THAT TARGET ENEMY SYSTEMS WITHOUT TARGETING PEOPLE.”<sup>57</sup> TRADITIONAL WARFARE, WHERE FIGHTING WAS STATE-VERSUS-STATE CHARACTERIZED BY PREDOMINANTLY FORCE-ON-FORCE ENGAGEMENTS, IS OUT OF VOGUE. WHEN FACED WITH OVERWHELMING US SUPERIORITY, ADVERSARIES RARELY STAND AND FIGHT TOE-TO-TOE WITH CONVENTIONAL US FORCES. IN A 2003 INTERVIEW, ADMIRAL EDMUND GIAMBASTIANI, COMMANDER OF US JOINT FORCES COMMAND, AVOWED, “CLEARLY WARFARE IS CHANGING. LARGE FORCE-ON-FORCE GROUPS ARE NOT...THE WAVE OF THE FUTURE.”<sup>58</sup> HIT AND RUN TACTICS, LIKE THOSE BY THE TALIBAN IN AFGHANISTAN AND THE INSURGENTS IN IRAQ, HAVE BECOME THE NORM. IN ADDITION, IF AN ENEMY CHOSE TO STAND AND FIGHT AGAINST THE US, SUCH AS MANY OF THE IRAQI DIVISIONS IN SOUTHERN IRAQ, THE US DEMONSTRATED A PREFERENCE FOR MERELY BYPASSING THEM. REMINISCENT OF PRE-NAPOLEONIC MANEUVER WARFARE IN EUROPE, THE FORCE-ON-FORCE ENGAGEMENT IS A RARITY.<sup>59</sup> THE NEW US STYLE OF WARFARE DEMANDS GREATER SPEED, COMMAND AND CONTROL, SITUATIONAL AWARENESS, AND FLEXIBILITY, ALLOWING US FORCES TO CIRCUMVENT ENEMY FORCES THAT DO NOT NEED ENGAGED. TO SELECTIVELY FIGHT THIS SUB-STATE ENEMY, SENIOR LEADERS MAY CHOOSE TO CLOSELY CONTROL TACTICAL EVENTS.

AS SEEN IN IRAQ, THIS TYPE OF SELECTIVE WARFARE DEMANDS A NEW WAY OF THINKING. CAUTION IS NECESSARY WHEN “WINNING THE HEARTS AND MINDS” OF THE ENEMY’S POPULATION. IN OIF, NUMEROUS POTENTIAL TARGETS WERE INTENTIONALLY NOT STRUCK TO AVOID UPSETTING THE IRAQI POPULATION.

MOREOVER, AS WITH ANY THINKING REACTING ENEMY, ADVERSARIES WILL “PERSIST IN THEIR EFFORTS TO COMPLICATE US PRECISION STRIKES BY COLLOCATING KEY ASSETS CLOSE TO OR INSIDE STRUCTURES SUCH AS MOSQUES, SCHOOLS, HOSPITALS, AND OTHER SITES THAT ARE OUT OF BOUNDS” IN AN ATTEMPT TO PLACE THE UNITED STATES IN POSITION TO BE DEMONIZED SHOULD IT ATTACK THESE TARGETS.<sup>60</sup> IF THE WAR IS AGAINST THE REGIME INSTEAD OF THE POPULATION, AS IN IRAQ, THE TARGET SET FOR AIR POWER CHANGES DRAMATICALLY. STRIKING A FULL RANGE OF NORMAL AIR POWER

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 187.

<sup>57</sup> Thomas P. M. Barnett, *The Pentagon’s New Map* (New York, N.Y.: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 2004), 330.

<sup>58</sup> Andrew Krepenovich, “Operation Iraqi Freedom: A First-Blush Assessment,” Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessment, Washington, D.C., 2003, 30.

<sup>59</sup> Michael Howard, *War in European History* (Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 1976), 70-1.

<sup>60</sup> Krepenovich, 22.

TARGETS WOULD BE COUNTERPRODUCTIVE TO THE OVERALL STRATEGIC EFFECT. THEREFORE, THIS NEW WAY OF THINKING MAY INVOLVE SENIOR LEADERS TAKING A PERSONAL INTEREST IN TACTICAL AFFAIRS THANKS TO THE COMBINED INFLUENCE OF ALL OF THESE POLITICAL FACTORS.

## **CHANGING NATURE OF US WARFARE**

THE CHANGING NATURE OF US WARFARE ALSO DRIVES LEADERS TO CLOSELY CONTROL TACTICAL EVENTS. SPECIFICALLY, THE MANAGEMENT OF RISK IN ACHIEVING STRATEGIC EFFECTS MAY DRIVE AN INCREASE IN THE LEVEL OF CONTROL AT THE OPERATIONAL (OR HIGHER) LEVEL OF WAR, WHICH WILL NECESSARILY CAUSE A SUBSEQUENT DECREASE IN TACTICAL EFFICIENCY. THIS DESIRE FOR STRATEGIC EFFECTIVENESS WITH LITTLE REGARD FOR TACTICAL EFFICIENCY ACCURATELY DESCRIBES THE RECENT NATURE OF AMERICAN WARFARE.

TWO TERMS—STRATEGIC EFFECTIVENESS AND TACTICAL EFFICIENCY—NEED CLARIFICATION. EFFECTIVENESS RELATES TO ACHIEVING OBJECTIVES; THEREFORE, STRATEGIC EFFECTIVENESS REFERS TO HOW WELL ONE IS MEETING STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES. SPECIFICALLY, STRATEGIC EFFECTIVENESS IS MEETING NATIONAL OBJECTIVES. IN TURN, THE JOINT FORCE COMMANDER'S OBJECTIVES REPRESENT THE OVERALL MILITARY OBJECTIVES. WHEN REFERENCING THE STRATEGIC LEVEL, THIS PAPER REFERS TO OVERALL MILITARY AND NATIONAL OBJECTIVES AS STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES. OF COURSE, EFFECTIVENESS EXISTS AT ALL LEVELS OF WAR AS WELL, BUT STRATEGIC EFFECTIVENESS IS WHAT COUNTS. UNFORTUNATELY, HISTORY IS RIDDLED WITH OPERATIONAL SUCCESSES THAT FAILED TO ACHIEVE STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES—SUCH AS THE UNITED STATES IN VIETNAM AND GERMANY IN WORLD WAR II.<sup>61</sup> HOWEVER, IN ANY CONFLICT, STRATEGIC EFFECTIVENESS REMAINS PARAMOUNT.

EFFICIENCY REFERS TO THE UTILIZATION OF RESOURCES. TACTICS AND OPERATIONS TEND TO FOCUS ON EFFICIENCY—ACHIEVING THE OBJECTIVE, BUT WITH FEWER RESOURCES IN THE SHORTEST AMOUNT OF TIME. AS SUCH, TACTICAL EFFICIENCY HAS BEEN THE PRIDE OF THE AIR FORCE SINCE THE VERY BEGINNING. FOR YEARS, OPERATORS STROVE TO DROP BOMBS WITH BETTER ACCURACY LEADING TO TODAY'S VAST ARRAY OF PRECISION MUNITIONS. ADDITIONALLY, BOMBS BECAME BIGGER IN ORDER TO DO MORE DAMAGE; NOW, THEY ARE GETTING SMALLER TO CONTROL COLLATERAL DAMAGE. WHEREAS IN THE PAST, THE AIR FORCE SOUGHT TO MINIMIZE SORTIES PER TARGET, IT NOW HAS THE CAPABILITY TO STRIKE MULTIPLE TARGETS WITH ONE SORTIE. OPERATIONAL EFFICIENCY FOCUSES ON USING LIMITED AIR AND SPACE ASSETS TO USE "JUST ENOUGH" RESOURCES "JUST IN TIME" TO ACHIEVE DESIRED EFFECTS. STRATEGIC EFFICIENCY FOCUSES ON MINIMIZING THE TOTAL MILITARY ASSETS APPLIED TO A CONFLICT, YET STILL ENOUGH TO ACHIEVE THE DESIRED EFFECTIVENESS.

ALL LEVELS OF EFFICIENCY ARE IMPORTANT, BUT OF THE THREE, THE AIR FORCE FOCUSES PRIMARILY ON TACTICAL EFFICIENCY. THE ABILITY TO PLACE MAXIMUM ORDNANCE ON AS MANY TARGETS AS POSSIBLE IN THE MINIMUM AMOUNT OF TIME WITH THE LEAST AMOUNT OF COLLATERAL DAMAGE,

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<sup>61</sup> Thomas X. Hammes, *The Sling and The Stone: On Warfare in the Twenty-First Century* (St. Paul, Minn.: Zenith Press, 2004), 70, 191.

PLACES US AIR POWER IN A CLASS BY ITSELF. HOWEVER, DUE TO ITS EFFICIENCY, AIR POWER IS NOW EXPECTED TO DO ALL OF THESE THINGS IN COMBAT. AS THE AIR FORCE CONTINUES TO HONE ITS ABILITY TO MINIMIZE COLLATERAL DAMAGE, THIS CAPABILITY BECOMES A CONSTRAINT.

WHEN BREACHED, THIS CONSTRAINT CAN TURN A TACTICAL MISSTEP INTO A STRATEGIC DISASTER, PROVIDING BOTH THE ENEMY AND THE MEDIA WITH THE ABILITY TO DEGRADE OVERALL STRATEGIC EFFECTIVENESS. THE BOMBING OF THE AL FIRDOS BUNKER IN OPERATION DESERT STORM AND THE CHINESE EMBASSY IN OPERATION ALLIED FORCE ARE PRIME EXAMPLES OF TACTICAL EVENTS HAVING NEGATIVE STRATEGIC EFFECTS.<sup>62</sup> SINCE STRATEGIC EFFECTIVENESS DETERMINES THE OUTCOME OF CONFLICTS, IT SHOULD BE THE FIRST PRIORITY OF ALL JFACCS, OVER TACTICAL EFFICIENCY. IN AN IDEAL WORLD, TACTICAL EFFICIENCY WOULD LEAD DIRECTLY TO STRATEGIC EFFECTIVENESS. HOWEVER, THE CONTEXT OF EACH CONFLICT IS DIFFERENT, AND MAY DRIVE A JFACC TO CLOSELY CONTROL TACTICAL AFFAIRS, AT THE EXPENSE OF TACTICAL EFFICIENCY, TO ACHIEVE STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES.

TWO RECENT JFACCS HAVE SHED LIGHT ON THEIR EXPERIENCES, RELATING AIR POWER EXECUTION TO STRATEGIC EFFECTIVENESS. RETIRED AIR FORCE LIEUTENANT GENERAL MICHAEL C. SHORT DESCRIBED HIS EXPERIENCE AS JFACC DURING OPERATION ALLIED FORCE AS A QUEST FOR STRATEGIC EFFECTIVENESS OVER TACTICAL EFFICIENCY.<sup>63</sup> ON THE OTHER HAND, RETIRED AIR FORCE LIEUTENANT GENERAL CHARLES R. HEFLEBOWER, JFACC IN KOREA FROM 1999-2001, EXPLAINED THE DIFFERENCE IN THE KOREAN SCENARIO WHERE TACTICAL EFFICIENCY WOULD BE REQUIRED TO ACHIEVE STRATEGIC EFFECTIVENESS AND POLITICAL CONSIDERATIONS WOULD BE SIGNIFICANTLY LESSENER.<sup>64</sup> THE LEVEL OF CONTROL APPLIED BY EACH OF THESE TWO JFACCS DIFFERED ACCORDING TO THEIR SITUATION.

GENERAL HEFLEBOWER'S EXPERIENCE IN KOREA DEMONSTRATED THE NEED FOR TACTICAL EFFICIENCY. IN ORDER TO ACHIEVE STRATEGIC EFFECTS IN A CONFLICT FOR IMMEDIATE SURVIVAL, TACTICAL DECISION-MAKING AT THE OPERATOR LEVEL WAS BOTH NECESSARY AND DESIRABLE. WITH THE AOC LOCATED LESS THAN A HUNDRED MILES FROM THE DEMILITARIZED ZONE, SENIOR LEADERS HAD TO PREPARE FOR A SCENARIO WHERE NORTH KOREA INVADED SOUTH KOREA AND AN INTENSE, CLOSE-UP BATTLE ENSUED. IN THIS CASE, GENERAL HEFLEBOWER SAID THAT HE WOULD HAVE TO RELY ON AIRCREWS EMPLOYING AIR POWER WITH MINIMAL GUIDANCE FROM THE AOC.<sup>65</sup> ALTHOUGH MOST UNITS HAVE A GOOD IDEA OF INITIAL GUIDANCE, SUBSEQUENT DIRECTION (A FEW DAYS INTO THE WAR) MAY BE VAGUE OUT OF NECESSITY. ALSO, POLITICAL INFLUENCE DURING THAT PERIOD WOULD BE MINISCULE COMPARED TO WHAT HAS BEEN SEEN IN RECENT SCENARIOS.<sup>66</sup> THE IMMEDIATE NEED FOR DRAMATIC EFFECTS WOULD OUTWEIGH THE NEGATIVE CONSEQUENCES OF UNINTENDED COLLATERAL DAMAGE.

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<sup>62</sup> Michael C. Short, interviewed by author, 5 January 2005.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> Charles R. Heflebower, interviewed by author, 1 February 2005.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

WHILE STILL A CONCERN, IN THIS CASE COLLATERAL DAMAGE WOULD TAKE A BACK SEAT.<sup>67</sup> AIRCREWS WOULD HAVE THE REQUIRED RESPONSIVENESS AND ABILITY TO DISPLAY INITIATIVE UNDER THE JFACC'S INTENT. THIS SCENARIO CLOSELY RESEMBLES THE CURRENT COLD WAR-STYLE GUIDANCE IN DOCTRINE, BUT STANDS IN STARK CONTRAST TO MOST RECENT APPLICATIONS OF AIR POWER.

GENERAL SHORT'S EXPERIENCE DURING ALLIED FORCE PROVIDES A MORE COMMON EXAMPLE OF WHAT TODAY'S JFACCs FACE. HIS EXPERIENCE HIGHLIGHTED HOW THE CHANGING NATURE OF US WARFARE CAN DRIVE THE NEED FOR CLOSE CONTROL. THE POLITICAL COMPLEXITY OF FIGHTING A WAR IN EUROPE, AS WELL AS HAVING TO COORDINATE THROUGH THE POLITICAL ENTITY OF THE NORTH ATLANTIC TREATY ORGANIZATION (NATO), DEMANDED A HANDS-ON APPROACH TO AIR POWER.<sup>68</sup> AT THE BEGINNING OF THE CONFLICT, GENERAL SHORT WOULD HAVE PREFERRED TO PASS DECISION-MAKING DOWN TO THE TACTICAL LEVEL AND HAD EVERY INTENTION OF DOING SO. AS GENERAL SHORT STATED, "AS AN AIRMAN, I JUST WANTED THEM TO GIVE ME THE OBJECTIVES AND THEN GET OUT OF MY WAY."<sup>69</sup> HOWEVER, AS COMBAT OPERATIONS DREW NEAR, GENERAL SHORT HAD TO INCREASINGLY ANSWER TO GENERAL WESLEY CLARK, SUPREME ALLIED COMMANDER EUROPE AND JFC FOR ALLIED FORCE, AS WELL AS NATO ALLIES. THE POLITICAL INFLUENCE ON THE KOSOVO OPERATION INCREASED TREMENDOUSLY AS AIR TARGETS FACED A THOROUGH POLITICAL REVIEW BY EACH NATO COUNTRY.

GENERAL SHORT PLACED LITTLE EMPHASIS ON TACTICAL EFFICIENCY. POLITICAL CONSTRAINTS LED GENERAL SHORT TO RESTRICT AIRCREWS TO A HIGHER ALTITUDE THAN DESIRABLE AND MANY SORTIES WERE NOT EFFECTIVE DUE TO APPROVAL DELAYS AND TACTICAL INPUTS FROM THE AOC. FOR OPERATORS TRAINED TO STANDARDS IMPLOING TACTICAL EFFICIENCY, THE SCENARIO PROVED RIDICULOUS. ONE A-10 PILOT NOTED, "THE DELAY AND THE TACTICAL DIRECTION WERE ABSURD AND A CLEAR VIOLATION OF THE PRINCIPLE OF CENTRALIZED CONTROL AND DECENTRALIZED EXECUTION."<sup>70</sup> FROM THE JFACC'S PERSPECTIVE, THIS SITUATION PROVED FRUSTRATING. GENERAL SHORT DESCRIBED THE BATTLES BETWEEN HIMSELF AND GENERAL CLARK AS A PRODUCT OF THE POLITICAL SENSITIVITIES INVOLVED.<sup>71</sup> GENERAL SHORT KNEW HE WAS CONSTRAINING AND FRUSTRATING HIS AIRCREWS. AS HE LATER REFLECTED, "I'LL ADMIT, WE WERE CENTRALLY EXECUTING. BUT, WHAT I COULD NOT APPRECIATE FULLY WHILE I WAS STILL IN UNIFORM WAS THE EXTREME POLITICAL DIFFICULTIES INVOLVED. LOOKING BACK ON IT ALL, I CAN SEE HOW WHAT WE DID WAS OUT OF NECESSITY AND THAT JFACCs OF TOMORROW MAY FACE SIMILAR OR EVEN MORE CHALLENGING SCENARIOS."<sup>72</sup> BOTH GENERAL SHORT AND HIS ALLIED FORCE AIRCREWS WERE FRUSTRATED BY THE SITUATION. HOWEVER, GIVEN THE NEW NATURE OF WARFARE AND GENERAL SHORT'S ABILITY TO MEET HIS OBJECTIVES, CLOSE CONTROL PROVED VERY NECESSARY AND EFFECTIVE.

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> Short interview.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> Christopher E. Haave and Phil M. Haun, *A-10s over Kosovo* (Maxwell AFB, Ala.: Air University Press, 2003), 147.

<sup>71</sup> Short interview.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

## CONCLUSION

A UNIQUE COMBINATION OF THREE CONTEXTUAL FACTORS—IMPROVEMENTS IN TECHNOLOGY, INCREASED POLITICAL INFLUENCE, AND THE CHANGING NATURE OF TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY US WARFARE—HAS DRIVEN US SENIOR LEADERS TO CLOSELY CONTROL TACTICAL EVENTS. SPECIFICALLY, TODAY'S AOC PROVIDES THE JFACC WITH THIS CAPABILITY. THE POLITICAL INFLUENCE ON MILITARY OPERATIONS THAT EXISTS TODAY WILL CONTINUE TO PROVIDE THE NEED TO MAINTAIN THIS TACTICAL LEVEL FOCUS. THE HEGEMONIC STATUS OF THE UNITED STATES BEGETS POLITICAL CONSTRAINTS THAT DO NOT AFFECT LESS POWERFUL NATIONS. OVERWHELMING FORCE, COMBINED WITH TARGETING INDIVIDUALS OR GROUPS WITHIN A STATE, WHILE LEAVING THE STATE INTACT AND WINNING OVER THE HOST NATION POPULATION, TURNS MODERN CONFLICTS INTO A NEW STYLE OF WARFARE. IN TURN, THIS NEW NATURE OF US WARFARE DRIVES LEADERS TO STRIVE FOR STRATEGIC EFFECTIVENESS WITH LITTLE REGARD FOR TACTICAL EFFICIENCY. THESE ELEMENTS, IN COMBINATION, ENCOURAGE LEADERS TO MORE CLOSELY CONTROL MILITARY OPERATIONS. BY UNDERSTANDING THESE FACTORS, THE AIR FORCE CAN REDUCE THE TENSION BETWEEN WHAT AIR FORCE DOCTRINE HOLDS SACRED AND WHAT OPERATORS EXPERIENCE IN THE FIELD.

## CHAPTER 3

### CASE STUDIES

*THE BATTLE COMMANDER NO LONGER NEEDS TO OVERLOOK THE BATTLEFIELD; HE NO LONGER NEEDS TO BE IN THE VICINITY OF THE BATTLEFIELD; HE NO LONGER NEEDS TO BE ADJACENT TO THE BATTLEFIELD; HE NO LONGER NEEDS TO BE IN THE SAME HEMISPHERE OF THE BATTLE. THE IMAGE OF THE 19<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY GENERAL ASTRIDE HIS HORSE SURVEYING THE BATTLE ON A VAST PLAIN BELOW HIM HAS BEEN REPLACED BY THAT OF THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY GENERAL VIEWING A CLUSTER OF VIDEO SCREENS AND DIGITAL MAPS THAT PORTRAY BATTLE CHANGES IN REAL-TIME—AND RESPONDING TO THOSE CHANGES INSTANTANEOUSLY.*

*-- ROBERT K. ACKERMAN, IN SIGNAL MAGAZINE,*

*2002*

ROBERT ACKERMAN'S VISION OF TODAY'S BATTLE COMMANDER ACCURATELY PORTRAYS THE CAPABILITIES INHERENT IN THE AOC. WITH MODERN IMAGING CAPABILITY, A JFACC'S VIEW OF THE BATTLESPACE HAS REACHED AN UNPRECEDENTED LEVEL OF SITUATIONAL AWARENESS. HOWEVER, NOTED EXPERTS ON COMMAND DISAGREE WITH THIS CENTRALIZATION. MARTIN VAN CREVELD, IN HIS DECISIVE WORK, *COMMAND IN WAR*, CONCLUDED "THE FACT THAT, HISTORICALLY SPEAKING, THOSE ARMIES HAVE BEEN MOST SUCCESSFUL WHICH DID NOT TURN THEIR TROOPS INTO AUTOMATONS, DID NOT ATTEMPT TO CONTROL EVERYTHING FROM THE TOP, AND ALLOWED SUBORDINATE COMMANDERS CONSIDERABLE LATITUDE HAS BEEN ABUNDANTLY DEMONSTRATED."<sup>73</sup> HE CONTINUED THAT DESPITE TODAY'S (1985) TECHNOLOGY, COMMAND SYSTEMS GIVE "NO EVIDENCE WHATSOEVER OF BEING ONE WHIT MORE CAPABLE" THAN "A MILLENNIUM AGO" AND THAT IF "TWENTY-FIVE CENTURIES OF HISTORICAL EXPERIENCE ARE ANY GUIDE," COUNTING ON "EXTRAORDINARY TECHNOLOGICAL ADVANCEMENTS" IS "SHEER DELUSION."<sup>74</sup> THE CONTEXTUAL FACTORS DISCUSSED ABOVE OPEN A NEW CHAPTER THAT WILL SHIFT MATTERS FROM VAN CREVELD'S UNCOMPROMISING STANCE.

IN THE TWENTY YEARS SINCE VAN CREVELD PUBLISHED HIS WORK, THE WORLD HAS SIGNIFICANTLY CHANGED. TECHNOLOGY HAS ENABLED LEADERS TO COMMAND FROM ANOTHER HEMISPHERE, POLITICAL INFLUENCE HAS VAULTED TO THE FOREFRONT, AND TACTICAL EFFICIENCY IS NO LONGER REQUIRED. WHILE COMMANDERS MUST STILL OVERCOME THE INHERENT FOG AND FRICTION OF WARFARE, THE CAPABILITY AS WELL AS THE NEED TO CLOSELY CONTROL EVENTS IS VERY HIGH. IN ADDITION, A LEADER'S DESIRE FOR OPERATIONAL FLEXIBILITY AND STRATEGIC EFFECTIVENESS NOW PERMEATES ALL THREE LEVELS OF WAR. THREE GLOBAL WAR ON TERRORISM (GWOT) CASE STUDIES SHOW THAT US COMMANDERS ARE CLOSELY CONTROLLING TACTICAL EVENTS. IF ONE CONSIDERS THESE COMMANDERS SUCCESSFUL, THEN IT MUST NOT BE 'SHEER DELUSION' TO 'CONTROL EVERYTHING FROM THE TOP' AND VAN CREVELD'S ARGUMENT FAILS TO HOLD TRUE TODAY.

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<sup>73</sup> Martin L. van Creveld, *Command in War* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1985), 270.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 265-6, 274.

## OPERATION NOBLE EAGLE

THE MISSION OF OPERATION NOBLE EAGLE (ONE) IS DEFENSE OF THE US HOMELAND. ALTHOUGH PROCEDURES HAVE BEEN IN PLACE FOR AIR DEFENSE OF THE UNITED STATES FOR MANY YEARS, THE UNLIKELIHOOD OF SUCH AN EVENT WAS THE REASON NORTH AMERICAN AEROSPACE DEFENSE COMMAND (NORAD) WAS UNABLE TO RESPOND IN TIME DURING THE ATTACKS ON THE WORLD TRADE CENTER AND PENTAGON. NORAD SIMPLY DID NOT HAVE ENOUGH ASSETS DEDICATED TO THIS HIGHLY UNLIKELY SCENARIO. IN EFFECT, THE UNITED STATES WAS INADEQUATELY PREPARED TO DEFEND AGAINST AN AIR ATTACK INSIDE ITS BORDERS BY ITS OWN AIRCRAFT.

IN THE AFTERMATH OF THESE EVENTS, ONE WAS CHARGED WITH PROTECTING SOVEREIGN US SOIL. THE AIR DEFENSE PORTION OF ONE ENSURES THE SAFETY OF US SKIES AND IS RUN BY NORAD. IMMEDIATELY AFTER 9/11, NORAD ESTABLISHED COMBAT AIR PATROLS OVER THE ENTIRE UNITED STATES WITH THE MISSION OF INTERCEPTING, AND IF NECESSARY SHOOTING DOWN, ANY AIRPLANE THREATENING TO ATTACK THE HOMELAND. NORAD'S MISSION REPRESENTS A MORAL DILEMMA WITH SIGNIFICANT CONSEQUENCES. THE MERE THOUGHT OF A US PILOT HAVING TO SHOOT DOWN A CIVILIAN AIRLINER OVER US TERRITORY WOULD HAVE BEEN UNTHINKABLE PRIOR TO SEPTEMBER 11, 2001.

US NORTHERN COMMAND (NORTHCOM), ESTABLISHED BY PRESIDENT BUSH IN OCTOBER OF 2002, WAS TASKED TO "PROVIDE COMMAND AND CONTROL OF THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE'S HOMELAND DEFENSE EFFORTS AND TO COORDINATE MILITARY SUPPORT TO CIVIL AUTHORITIES."<sup>75</sup> THEREFORE, WITH THE NORTHCOM COMMANDER DUAL-HATTED AS THE NORAD COMMANDER, THE HOMELAND AIR DEFENSE PORTION OF ONE ALSO FELL UNDER A COMBATANT COMMANDER. WITHIN NORAD, THE AIR NATIONAL GUARD'S FIRST AIR FORCE IS RESPONSIBLE FOR EXECUTING ONE OVER THE CONTINENTAL UNITED STATES. LOCATED AT TYNDALL AIR FORCE BASE IN FLORIDA, FIRST AIR FORCE UTILIZES AN AIR OPERATIONS CENTER (AOC) THAT PRODUCES AN AIR TASKING ORDER (ATO) FOR ALL AIRCRAFT INVOLVED IN THE AIR DEFENSE MISSION, JUST AS IS DONE FOR COMBAT THEATERS OVERSEAS.<sup>76</sup>

THREE COMMANDERS HAVE BEEN DELEGATED SHOOT-DOWN AUTHORITY FROM THE PRESIDENT FOR ONE, ALTHOUGH PRESIDENTIAL AUTHORITY IS STILL SOUGHT WHEN TIME IS AVAILABLE. DEFENSE SECRETARY DONALD H. RUMSFELD DECLARED EXACTLY WHO HAD SHOOT-DOWN AUTHORITY BY NAME SIXTEEN DAYS AFTER 9/11. IN A PRESS CONFERENCE, HE FURTHER CLARIFIED:

THERE ARE TIMES WHEN THE SITUATION IS SUFFICIENTLY IMMEDIATE THAT THE AUTHORITY IS DELEGATED BELOW THE (COMBATANT COMMANDER LEVEL) FOR PERIODS OF TIME, BUT ALWAYS, IN A CASE LIKE THIS, ALWAYS WITH THE UNDERSTANDING THAT IF TIME PERMITS, IT WOULD BE IMMEDIATELY BROUGHT UP TO THE (COMBATANT

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<sup>75</sup> Steve Bowman and Scott Shepherd, "Homeland Security: Establishment and Implementation of the US Northern Command," *CRS Report to Congress*, Order Code RS21322, updated 10 February 2005.

<sup>76</sup> Rebecca Grant, *The First 600 Days of Combat: The US Air Force in the Global War on Terrorism* (Washington, D.C.: IRIS Press, 2004), 29.



COMMANDER), AND THEN TO ME AND, IF TIME STILL PERMITS, FOR ME TO GO TO THE PRESIDENT.<sup>77</sup>

GENERAL ED EBERHART, THEN-COMMANDER OF NORAD, CONFIRMED IN A 2002 INTERVIEW THAT THESE RELATIONSHIPS STILL STOOD AS ONE EASED INTO STEADY STATE OPERATIONS, BY STATING “IF THERE’S TIME, WE’D GO ALL THE WAY TO THE PRESIDENT” FOR APPROVAL TO SHOOT DOWN AN AIRLINER. “OTHERWISE, THE STANDING ORDERS HAVE BEEN PUSHED DOWN.”<sup>78</sup> THE THREE-STAR COMMANDER OF FIRST AIR FORCE HAS SHOOT-DOWN AUTHORITY FOR THE CONTINENTAL US. IN ALASKA, THIS DUTY FALLS UNDER THE THREE-STAR COMMANDER OF THE ALASKAN NORTH AMERICAN AEROSPACE DEFENSE COMMAND REGION AT ELMENDORF AIR FORCE BASE. FOR HAWAII, THE FOUR-STAR COMMANDER OF US PACIFIC COMMAND HAS THE AUTHORITY.<sup>79</sup> ALTHOUGH NONE OF THESE THREE COMMANDERS (OR THEIR SUCCESSORS) HAS ORDERED A SHOOT-DOWN, THEY HAVE CONDUCTED NUMEROUS EXERCISES TO SIMULATE THE CHALLENGES ASSOCIATED WITH DOING SO. IN 2004, GEN EBERHART STATED THAT NORAD PRACTICES HIJACKED AIRLINER SCENARIOS “SEVERAL TIMES A WEEK” MOSTLY TO OVERCOME POTENTIAL “TRIGGER-HESITANCY” ANGST AMONG BOTH OPERATORS AND DECISION MAKERS.<sup>80</sup> THESE WAR GAMES, HOWEVER, CAN ONLY DEMONSTRATE THE PROCESS *INTENDED* FOR USE IN AN ACTUAL ONE SCENARIO, SINCE A REAL ‘NOBLE EAGLE’ HAS NEVER BEEN CARRIED OUT.

**TECHNOLOGY.** THE MAJOR TECHNOLOGICAL IMPROVEMENT DURING ONE WAS THE INTEGRATION OF THE FEDERAL AVIATION ADMINISTRATION’S (FAA) RADAR SYSTEM INTO NORAD’S. ON 9/11, NORAD WAS UNAWARE THAT A PROBLEM EXISTED UNTIL THE FAA NOTIFIED THE COMMAND.<sup>81</sup> SUBSEQUENTLY, NORAD TOOK IMMEDIATE STEPS TO INTEGRATE FAA EQUIPMENT INTO THE MILITARY’S AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL AND WARNING SYSTEM IN ADDITION TO INCREASING THE LEVEL OF COMMUNICATION BETWEEN THE TWO AGENCIES. INTELLIGENCE FROM NORAD’S RADAR IS NOW FUSED WITH INFORMATION FROM THE FAA’S RADAR NETWORK, AIRBORNE AWACS PLATFORMS, AND TETHERED AEROSTAT RADARS ALONG THE US SOUTHERN BORDER.<sup>82</sup> THIS TECHNOLOGY, ALONG WITH IMPROVED LINES OF COMMUNICATION, ALLOWS NORAD AND EACH OF ITS REGIONS TO CONTINUOUSLY MONITOR THE AIR SITUATION OVER THEIR RESPECTIVE TERRITORY. UNLIKE 9/11, WHEN THE FIRST AIR FORCE COMMANDER DID NOT KNOW ABOUT THE SHOOT-DOWN AUTHORIZATION GIVEN BY PRESIDENT BUSH UNTIL AFTER THE LAST AIRCRAFT CRASHED, THESE COMMANDERS NOW HAVE FIRST-HAND INFORMATION ON THE

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<sup>77</sup> Jim Garamone, “Making the Skies Safe,” *American Forces Press Service*, 28 September 2001. Quoted from Grant, *The First 600 Days of Combat*, 33.

<sup>78</sup> Adam J. Hebert, “The Return of NORAD,” *Air Force Magazine*, February 2002, 54.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> Adam J. Hebert, “Homeland Air Force,” *Air Force Magazine*, January 2004, 38.

<sup>81</sup> *The 9/11 Commission Report: Final Report of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks upon the United States* (New York, N.Y.: W.W. Norton & Company, 2004), 20.

<sup>82</sup> Grant, *The First 600 Days of Combat*, 30-31.

DEVELOPING SITUATION.<sup>83</sup> AS A RESULT, COMMANDERS NOW POSSESS BETTER INFORMATION UPON WHICH TO DISCUSS, MAKE, AND TRANSMIT THEIR DECISION PRIOR TO AN ACTUAL ENGAGEMENT OR SHOOT-DOWN.

**POLITICAL INFLUENCE.** ORDERING A SHOOT DOWN OF A CIVILIAN AIRLINER, WHILE NOT AS DRAMATIC AS ORDERING THE EMPLOYMENT OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS, INCLUDES SIMILAR POLITICAL CONSIDERATIONS. IN THIS CASE, DOMESTIC OPINION WOULD PROVE CRITICAL. WHETHER CORRECT OR INCORRECT IN AUTHORIZING A SHOOT-DOWN, THE DECISION MAKER WOULD ULTIMATELY FACE SIGNIFICANT SCRUTINY AND BE SECOND-GUESSED ON THE DECISION, WHERE EACH INTERCEPT WOULD RESEMBLE A MINI-CUBAN MISSILE CRISIS. ON THE FATEFUL DAY OF 9/11, PRESIDENT BUSH GAVE THE ORDER FOR A PAIR OF F-16S PATROLLING THE WASHINGTON AREA TO SHOOT DOWN ANY HIJACKED AIRLINER THAT THREATENED A TARGET.<sup>84</sup> THE FOURTH AND FINAL AIRLINER, UNITED AIRLINES FLIGHT 93, INVOLVED IN 9/11, HOWEVER, CRASHED IN PENNSYLVANIA AFTER PASSENGERS TOOK THEIR FATE INTO THEIR OWN HANDS.<sup>85</sup> THIS CRASH PRECLUDED THE F-16S FROM HAVING TO EXECUTE AS INSTRUCTED, BUT THE MERE AUTHORIZATION OF THE SHOOT-DOWN BROUGHT THE PROCESS INTO THE PUBLIC EYE.

MUCH OF THE POST-9/11 RHETORIC ON SHOOT-DOWN AUTHORIZATION HAS COME FROM VICE PRESIDENT DICK CHENEY. ON SEPTEMBER 16, 2001, CHENEY STATED THAT ON 9/11, HE HAD RECOMMENDED THAT PRESIDENT BUSH AUTHORIZE THE SHOOT-DOWN OF AIRLINERS AS A LAST RESORT. IN JUSTIFYING HIS RECOMMENDATION, HE CLAIMED “YOU HAVE TO ASK YOURSELF, IF WE HAD HAD A COMBAT AIR PATROL UP OVER NEW YORK AND WE’D HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO TAKE OUT THE TWO AIRCRAFT THAT HIT THE WORLD TRADE CENTER, WOULD WE HAVE BEEN JUSTIFIED IN DOING THAT? I THINK ABSOLUTELY WE WOULD HAVE.”<sup>86</sup> THESE COMMENTS, POTENTIALLY AIMED AT BOTH JUSTIFYING HIS DECISION AND CONDITIONING THE US POPULACE PRIOR TO ANY ACTUAL SHOOT-DOWNS OF AIRLINERS, DEMONSTRATE THE VICE PRESIDENT’S CONCERN OVER THE EXTREME POLITICAL INFLUENCE ON THE OPERATION ITSELF. ONE REPRESENTS A POLITICAL SENSITIVITY THAT OUTWEIGHS RECENT CONFLICTS AND ONLY PALES IN COMPARISON TO CURRENT NUCLEAR OR OTHER WEAPONS OF MASS DESTRUCTION (WMD) OPERATIONS, WHICH ALSO REQUIRE TIME-CONSTRAINED DECISION-MAKING.

IN REALITY, TWO INTERCEPTED AIRPLANES HAVE FLOWN DIRECTLY OVER THE PRESIDENT WITHOUT HAVING BEEN SHOT DOWN. IN JUNE 2004, DURING CEREMONIES MARKING PRESIDENT RONALD REAGAN’S DEATH, THE NORTHCOM COMMANDER (ALSO DUAL-HATTED AS THE NORAD COMMANDER) FACED THE DECISION TO SHOOT DOWN AN UNIDENTIFIED PLANE THAT VIOLATED RESTRICTED AIRSPACE. UNBEKNOWNST TO HIM, THE FAA HAD CLEARED THE PLANE TO FLY OVER, BUT HAD NOT INFORMED THE MILITARY.<sup>87</sup> SECONDLY, IN OCTOBER 2004, THE MILITARY INTERCEPTED A LIGHT AIRCRAFT THAT HAD

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<sup>83</sup> *The 9/11 Report*, 33, 42; Grant, *The First 600 Days of Combat*, 31-2.

<sup>84</sup> *THE 9/11 REPORT*, 40-1.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, 30.

<sup>86</sup> Hebert, “The Return of NORAD,” 54.

<sup>87</sup> Bowman, *CRS Report to Congress*.

MISTAKENLY FLOWN OVER THE SPACE COAST STADIUM IN FLORIDA DURING THE PRESIDENT'S RALLY. DISOBEYING DIRECTIONS, THE PILOT FLEW DIRECTLY OVER THE STADIUM WHILE THE PRESIDENT WAS SPEAKING. CURIOUSLY, THE WHITE HOUSE ISSUED A STATEMENT THAT THE PRESIDENT WAS NEVER IN DANGER.<sup>88</sup> SO, WHY DID THEY NOT GET SHOT DOWN? THIS COULD BE DUE TO EXTREMELY PRESCIENT KNOWLEDGE BY THE COMMANDERS INVOLVED OR PERHAPS SOME 'RIGGER-HESITANCY' AS MENTIONED ABOVE. DUE TO THE LIMITED PRESS ACCOUNTS OF THE SITUATION, THE EXACT DETAILS MAY HAVE BEEN SENSATIONALIZED TO SOME EXTENT SO TO DRAW CONCLUSIONS FROM THE EVIDENCE WOULD BE PREMATURE. HOWEVER, IT SPEAKS VOLUMES TO THE POLITICAL SENSITIVITY OF SHOOTING DOWN A CIVILIAN AIRCRAFT OVER US SOIL IN HOPES OF PREVENTING A TRAGEDY.

**CHANGING US NATURE OF WARFARE.** THE STRATEGIC EFFECTS OF THE AIR POWER PORTION OF ONE ARE DIFFICULT TO MEASURE. IF ONE LOOKED SOLELY AT THE MISSION OF DEFENDING THE HOMELAND FROM AERIAL ATTACK, ONE HAS BEEN SUCCESSFUL IN DOING SO. DUE TO THE LACK OF ATTEMPTS TO ATTACK THE US HOMELAND BY AIR, ONE COULD CLAIM, BUT NOT PROVE, THAT NOBLE EAGLE HAS BEEN EFFECTIVE IN DETERRING SUCH ACTS. HOWEVER, SINCE ONE DECISION-MAKERS HAVE NOT HAD TO ORDER A SHOOT-DOWN, THE CONTROL MECHANISMS OF ONE HAVE ONLY BEEN VALIDATED THROUGH EXERCISES. NEVERTHELESS, THE MOST IMPORTANT FACTOR IN THIS CASE IS THAT THE US HOMELAND DOES NOT GET ATTACKED IN THE FUTURE. IN THE SAME MANNER THAT ONE CAN CLAIM THAT THE US NUCLEAR ARSENAL HAS BEEN STRATEGICALLY EFFECTIVE THROUGH THEIR LACK OF USE, ONE CAN ALSO CLAIM THAT ONE HAS BEEN STRATEGICALLY EFFECTIVE TO DATE.

ONE CERTAINLY, HOWEVER, HAS NOT BEEN EFFICIENT. THE DEFENSIVE ROLE OF ONE PLACES A HEAVY BURDEN ON US RESOURCES. THE 30,000 AIR DEFENSE SORTIES THAT HAVE ALREADY BEEN FLOWN DO NOT INCLUDE ALL OF THE ALERT MISSIONS REQUIRING BOTH AIRPLANES AND AIRCREWS READY FOR IMMEDIATE LAUNCH. EVEN THOUGH THESE MISSIONS WERE NOT FLOWN, THE RESOURCES INVOLVED WERE UNABLE TO ACCOMPLISH ANYTHING ELSE DURING THAT TIME PERIOD. OF THOSE THAT DID FLY, THE MISSIONS TOOK AWAY FROM CRITICAL TRAINING THAT AIRCREWS WOULD OTHERWISE BE ACCOMPLISHING. THEREFORE, FROM AN EFFICIENCY STANDPOINT, 30,000-PLUS SORTIES HAVE BEEN FLOWN WITHOUT A SINGLE SHOT FIRED. DEFENSIVE COMBAT AIR PATROLS, WHETHER OVER THE UNITED STATES OR DURING OPERATIONS SOUTHERN OR NORTHERN WATCH, ARE INHERENTLY NEVER AN EFFICIENT METHOD OF EMPLOYING AIR POWER. ONE'S SHEER NUMBER OF SORTIES, COMBINED WITH THE ALERT POSTURE OF FIGHTERS ON THE GROUND, HAS RUN UP A HEFTY PRICE TAG. IT MAY HAVE BEEN INEFFICIENT, BUT NECESSARY. IN THIS POLITICALLY CHARGED SCENARIO, THE NEED FOR EFFECTIVENESS TURNS CONCERNS OVER EFFICIENCY INTO ONLY A MATTER OF COST.

**OVERALL.** SENIOR LEADERS CLOSELY CONTROLLED ONE DUE PRIMARILY TO THE INTENSE POLITICAL INFLUENCE ON A MISSION THAT NO ONE EVER WANTS TO SEE EXECUTED. WHILE THE FINAL LEVEL OF CONTROL WAS PLACED AT THE THREE-STAR LEVEL (JFACC EQUIVALENT), THE PRESIDENT WOULD TAKE CONTROL IF TIME PERMITTED. THIS SAME SCENARIO OF AERIAL ATTACK ON THE UNITED

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<sup>88</sup> Scott Blake, "F-16s Chase Plane from Rally," *Florida Today*, 24 October 2004.

STATES MAY BE UNLIKELY, HOWEVER, THE PRESIDENT CAN ILL AFFORD FOR LIGHTNING TO STRIKE TWICE. IN ORDER FOR PRESIDENT BUSH TO RETURN THE COUNTRY BACK TO THE STATUS QUO AND PREVENT TERRORISM FROM AFFECTING CITIZEN'S DAILY LIFESTYLE, HE NEEDED TO MAKE THE COUNTRY FEEL SECURE AND TO IMPLEMENT MEASURES TO ENSURE THAT A SIMILAR EVENT DID NOT HAPPEN AGAIN. EVERY DAY THAT THE US IS FREE FROM ATTACK, HOWEVER, IS ONE MORE DAY WHERE ONE IS EFFECTIVE. THEREFORE, THE INEFFICIENT USE OF AIR POWER TO GUARD AGAINST A HIGHLY UNLIKELY REPEAT SCENARIO OF 9/11 IS MORE THAN WORTH THE POTENTIAL POLITICAL COST OF ABSORBING ANOTHER ATTACK. THIS INEFFICIENCY MAY FRUSTRATE AIRCREWS, BUT THEY MUST UNDERSTAND THE PURPOSE OF ALL THESE SORTIES—TO REASSURE THE PUBLIC THAT 9/11 WILL NOT HAPPEN AGAIN. THE SENIOR LEADERS OF THE UNITED STATES HAD NO CHOICE BUT TO CLOSELY CONTROL ONE.

ONE SET THE STAGE FOR OFFENSIVE OPERATIONS IN THE GWOT AND REMINDED SENIOR LEADERS, BOTH CIVILIAN AND MILITARY, OF THE US MILITARY'S ABILITY TO CLOSELY CONTROL AIR POWER THROUGH AN AOC. FOR THE THREE-STAR LEADERS AND ABOVE, IT PRESENTED AN EXERCISED CAPABILITY TO MAKE A COMPLEX POLITICALLY CHARGED TACTICAL DECISION AT THE HIGHEST LEVELS OF GOVERNMENT. THIS DEMONSTRATED ABILITY (THROUGH EXERCISES) MAY HAVE ADVERTISED AN AVENUE FOR SENIOR LEADERS DURING OEF OR OIF TO CONTROL TACTICAL STRIKES.

#### **OPERATION ENDURING FREEDOM**

OPERATION ENDURING FREEDOM SERVED TO PUNISH THE PERPETRATORS INVOLVED IN THE 9/11 ATTACKS. LESS THAN ONE FULL MONTH AFTER THE ATTACKS ON THE HOMELAND, US MILITARY FORCES BEGAN OPERATIONS IN AFGHANISTAN TO DEFEAT AL QAEDA AND ITS TALIBAN SPONSORS. WHILE ONE DEFENDED THE HOMELAND AGAINST ANOTHER ATTACK, OEF KICKED OFF IN A COUNTRY KNOWN FROM THE SOVIET EXPERIENCE FOR ITS UNFORGIVING AND DIFFICULT TERRAIN. BY USING AN ABUNDANCE OF AIR POWER AND INNOVATIVE TACTICS, US FORCES WOULD OVERCOME THE CHALLENGE PRESENTED BY AFGHANISTAN AND SUBSEQUENTLY RID THE COUNTRY OF EFFECTIVE AL QAEDA AND TALIBAN FORCES. HOWEVER, THIS SELECTIVE TARGETING OF SUB-STATE ACTORS PROVIDED A UNIQUE DYNAMIC THAT WOULD LEAD SENIOR LEADERS TO CLOSELY CONTROL MANY TACTICAL EVENTS.

THE MISSION OF OEF WAS CLEAR. ON OCTOBER 7, 2001, PRESIDENT BUSH SET FORTH THE MILITARY OBJECTIVES OF THE OPERATION IN AFGHANISTAN. OEF WAS "TO DISRUPT THE USE OF AFGHANISTAN AS A TERRORIST BASE OF OPERATIONS AND TO ATTACK THE MILITARY CAPABILITY OF THE TALIBAN REGIME."<sup>89</sup> THIS MISSION ALSO IMPLIED THE CAPTURE OF OSAMA BIN LADEN AND HIS TOP AL QAEDA LIEUTENANTS AS WELL AS ENSURING THAT NEITHER AL QAEDA NOR THE TALIBAN RETAINED THE ABILITY TO CONDUCT TERRORIST OPERATIONS IN THE FUTURE. WITH MINIMAL CASUALTIES, THE MILITARY WAS TO MEET OBJECTIVES WHILE MINIMIZING THE IMPACT TO THE INTERNATIONAL MUSLIM COMMUNITY. THEIR PRIMARY MEANS WOULD BE THROUGH TIME-SENSITIVE TARGETS (TST).

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<sup>89</sup> George W. Bush, Speech, White House Treaty Room, 7 October 2001, on-line, Internet, 30 April 2005, available from <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/10/20011007-8.html>.

COMMAND AND CONTROL ARRANGEMENTS FOR OEF PRESENTED A UNIQUE COMBINATION OF ASSETS PROSECUTING AN INITIALLY AIR INTENSIVE OPERATION IN A LANDLOCKED COUNTRY. GENERAL TOMMY R. FRANKS, AS THE CENTRAL COMMAND (CENTCOM) COMMANDER, WAS THE JOINT FORCE COMMANDER. IN THE INITIAL STAGES OF OEF, LIEUTENANT GENERAL CHARLES WALD, AND LATER LIEUTENANT GENERAL T. MICHAEL MOSELEY, SERVED AS THE JFACC. THE JFACC WAS THE SUPPORTED COMMANDER UNTIL ENOUGH SPECIAL OPERATIONS FORCES (SOF) ASSETS FLOWED INTO THEATER, AND THEN THE SOF COMMANDER BECAME THE SUPPORTED COMMANDER. SUBSEQUENTLY, GENERAL FRANKS CREATED A COMBINED FORCE LAND COMPONENT COMMANDER (CFLCC), LIEUTENANT GENERAL PAUL T. MIKOLASHEK AND MADE HIM THE SUPPORTED COMMANDER FOR THE OPERATION.<sup>90</sup> GENERAL FRANKS RETAINED HIS HEADQUARTERS IN TAMPA, FLORIDA, THE JFACC RETAINED HIS AT THE CAOC AT PRINCE SULTAN AIR BASE IN SAUDI ARABIA, AND THE CFLCC ESTABLISHED HIS HEADQUARTERS AT CAMP DOHA, KUWAIT. INCREASED CONNECTIVITY BETWEEN THE HEADQUARTERS ENABLED THIS GEOGRAPHICALLY DISPERSED COMMAND AND CONTROL RELATIONSHIP.

**TECHNOLOGY.** THE MAIN TECHNOLOGICAL ADVANCE AFFECTING OEF WAS THE ABILITY TO STRIKE TARGETS FROM AN UNMANNED AERIAL VEHICLE (UAV). SPECIFICALLY, THE PREDATOR UAV EMERGED FROM ITS RECONNAISSANCE ROLE AND MADE ITS DEBUT AS A STRIKE ASSET. EVEN IN THE RECON ROLE, THE PREDATOR HAD OPENED A NEW LINE OF VISIBILITY FROM THE CAOC TO THE BATTLEFIELD AND PRESENTED SENIOR LEADERS AN AVENUE TO GET INVOLVED AT THE TACTICAL LEVEL SHOULD THEY SO CHOOSE. THE ABILITY TO BOTH MONITOR TARGETS AND THEN ACTUALLY STRIKE THESE TARGETS IN REAL-TIME PRESENTED AN APPEALING TEMPTATION FOR LEADERS TO INTERVENE IN TACTICAL OPERATIONS. REFERRING BACK TO EVENTS FROM OPERATION ALLIED FORCE, DR REBECCA GRANT DEPICTED SENIOR LEADERS IN THE CAOC USING PREDATORS TO “SORT OUT WHETHER A TARGET COULD BE ATTACKED UNDER THE ROE [RULES OF ENGAGEMENT] OF THE DAY—A TACTICAL EXECUTION TASK.”<sup>91</sup> THE ADDITION OF HELLFIRE MISSILES TO THE PREDATOR DURING OEF ALLOWED THESE COMMANDERS TO TAKE THE NEXT LOGICAL STEP AND ACTUALLY TACTICALLY DIRECT STRIKES AS WELL.

MOST US AIRCREWS TOOK OFF WITHOUT TARGETS AND RECEIVED EXECUTION AUTHORITY FROM THE CAOC.<sup>92</sup> IN ADDITION, THE PREDATOR, EITHER BY USING ITS OWN HELLFIRE MISSILES OR BY FINDING TARGETS FOR OTHER PLATFORMS, PROVED ESSENTIAL FOR EMPLOYING AIR POWER. EVEN PRESIDENT BUSH ALLUDED THAT THE UAV LED TO CLOSE CONTROL.

THIS COMBINATION -- REAL-TIME INTELLIGENCE, LOCAL ALLIED FORCES, SPECIAL FORCES, AND PRECISION AIR POWER -- HAS REALLY NEVER BEEN USED BEFORE. THE CONFLICT IN AFGHANISTAN HAS TAUGHT US MORE ABOUT THE FUTURE OF OUR MILITARY THAN A DECADE OF BLUE RIBBON PANELS AND THINK-TANK SYMPOSIUMS. THE PREDATOR IS A GOOD EXAMPLE. THIS UNMANNED AERIAL VEHICLE IS ABLE TO CIRCLE

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<sup>90</sup> Headquarters USAF, XOL “Operation Anaconda: An Air Power Perspective,” Task Force Enduring Look (TFEL), 7 February 2005, 25.

<sup>91</sup> Rebecca Grant, “Reach-Forward,” *Air Force Magazine*, October 2002, 45.

<sup>92</sup> Anthony H. Cordesman, *The Lessons of Afghanistan: War Fighting, Intelligence, and Force Transformation* (Washington, D.C.: The CSIS Press, 2002), 111.

OVER ENEMY FORCES, GATHER INTELLIGENCE, TRANSMIT INFORMATION INSTANTLY BACK TO COMMANDERS, THEN FIRE ON TARGETS WITH EXTREME ACCURACY.<sup>93</sup>

PRESIDENT BUSH'S COMMENTS IMPLY A TACIT APPROVAL OF CLOSE CONTROL. GEN FRANKS, IN TESTIMONY TO THE SENATE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE AFTER OEF, STATED, "THE COMMAND AND CONTROL OF AIR, GROUND, NAVAL, AND SOF FROM 7,000 MILES AWAY WAS A UNIQUE EXPERIENCE IN WARFARE AS OUR FORCES ACHIEVED UNPRECEDENTED REAL-TIME SITUATIONAL AWARENESS AND C2 CONNECTIVITY."<sup>94</sup> THESE CAPABILITIES ENABLED OPERATIONAL FLEXIBILITY.

**POLITICAL INFLUENCE.** IN LIGHT OF THE ATTACKS ON THE US HOMELAND, THE POLITICAL INFLUENCE ON OEF OPERATIONS REMAINED SURPRISINGLY HIGH. AFGHANISTAN HAD "UNIQUE POLITICAL ASPECTS—THE EXTENT AND THE PERCEPTIONS OF COLLATERAL DAMAGE WERE VERY IMPORTANT IN THE BROADER CONTEXT OF HOW THE INTERNATIONAL MUSLIM COMMUNITY (AND OTHERS) WOULD REACT TO US OPERATIONS AGAINST A TERRORIST NETWORK THAT HAPPENED TO BE ASSOCIATED WITH MUSLIMS."<sup>95</sup> WHILE MANY AMERICANS WERE READY TO AVENGE THE LOSS OF LIFE ON US SOIL, CONCERN FOR INTERNATIONAL OPINION FORCED US MILITARY LEADERS TO PROCEED CAUTIOUSLY. IN TURN, GENERAL FRANKS RETAINED DECISION AUTHORITY FOR MANY TARGETS IN OEF. THE LEADERS OF OEF PERCEIVED THE NEED TO MINIMIZE CIVILIAN CASUALTIES IN ACHIEVING OBJECTIVES.

ARMED UAVS IN COMBINATION WITH GPS-GUIDED MUNITIONS ALLOWED SENIOR DECISION MAKERS TO "CALL DOWN PRECISION STRIKES 24 HOURS A DAY."<sup>96</sup> THE TIME-SENSITIVE TARGETING PROCESS ROUTINELY USED AIR POWER TO ATTACK POP-UP OR FLEETING TARGETS. IN FACT, 80 PERCENT OF THE TARGETS STRUCK BY US AIR POWER WERE TST TARGETS.<sup>97</sup> ACCORDING TO THE DIRECTOR OF COMBAT OPERATIONS AT THE CAOC, UNDER THE RULES OF ENGAGEMENT (ROE) FOR ENDURING FREEDOM, "PRE-PLANNED STRIKES, INTERDICTION TARGETS AND TIME-SENSITIVE TARGETS ALL HAD TO BE APPROVED BY USCENCOM; AND FOR THE MOST PART, THE USCENCOM/J-2 AND LEGAL ADVISORS...DROVE WHAT WE DID AND DID NOT TARGET."<sup>98</sup> HOWEVER, SOMETIMES APPROVAL BY THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE WAS NECESSARY AS WELL.

GUIDANCE REQUIRED THE DEFENSE SECRETARY, DONALD H. RUMSFELD, TO PERSONALLY APPROVE ANY STRIKES ON POP-UP TARGETS SUCH AS VEHICLES THOUGHT TO INCLUDE SENIOR TALIBAN AND AL QAEDA LEADERS. RUMSFELD DID NOT SPEAK DIRECTLY TO THE ISSUE FOR TARGET APPROVAL, BUT HE MADE NO SECRET THAT HE WAS IN CLOSE CONTACT WITH FRANKS.<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> George W. Bush, Speech, The Citadel, Charleston, South Carolina, 11 December 2001, on-line, Internet, 30 April 2005, available from <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/12/20011211-6.html>.

<sup>94</sup> Tommy R. Franks, "Lessons Learned from Operation Iraqi Freedom," Congressional Testimony before the Senate Armed Services Committee, 9 July 2003.

<sup>95</sup> CORDESMAN, *LESSONS OF AFGHANISTAN*, 110.

<sup>96</sup> Grant, "Reach-Forward," 46.

<sup>97</sup> Rebecca Grant, "An Air War Like No Other," *Air Force Magazine*, November 2002, 30.

<sup>98</sup> TFEL, "Operation Anaconda: An Air Power Perspective," 40.

<sup>99</sup> Grant, "Reach-Forward," 46.

THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE DID NOT HAVE TO APPROVE ALL OF THE EMERGING TARGETS, BUT THE FACT THAT CERTAIN TARGETS REQUIRED HIGHER-LEVEL APPROVAL LED TO SOME MISSED OPPORTUNITIES.

THE LARGEST MISSED OPPORTUNITY WAS MULLAH MOHAMMED OMAR, THE SPIRITUAL LEADER OF THE TALIBAN AND OSAMA BIN LADEN'S NUMBER TWO MAN.

AS REPORTED BY SEYMOUR M. HERSH IN THE NEW YORKER, A HELLFIRE-ARMED PREDATOR WAS PATROLLING THE ROADS NEAR KABUL ON THE FIRST NIGHT OF THE WAR. HERSH ASSERTED, "THE PREDATOR IDENTIFIED A GROUP OF CARS AND TRUCKS FLEEING THE CAPITAL AS A CONVOY CARRYING MULLAH OMAR, THE TALIBAN LEADER." THE CIA CONTROLLER HAD TO REFER THE SHOOT-DON'T SHOOT DECISION TO "OFFICERS ON DUTY AT THE HEADQUARTERS" OF CENTRAL COMMAND IN TAMPA, FLA.<sup>100</sup>

GENERAL FRANK'S WAS LATER QUOTED AS SAYING, "MY JAG [JUDGE ADVOCATE GENERAL—A LEGAL OFFICER] DOESN'T LIKE THIS, SO WE'RE NOT GOING TO FIRE."<sup>101</sup> ALTHOUGH AN OPERATIVE ON THE GROUND LATER CONFIRMED THAT OMAR WAS INDEED IN THE CONVOY, GENERAL FRANK'S CHOICE NOT TO FIRE IS INDICATIVE OF THE CLAUSEWITZIAN FOG AND FRICTION OF WARFARE. IT WOULD BE UNFAIR TO JUDGE A COMMANDER'S STYLE FROM ONE INCIDENT, SO ALTHOUGH IN THIS CASE, GENERAL FRANK'S DECISION WAS INCORRECT, HIS OVERALL CAUTION REGARDING OEF MAY HAVE BEEN CRITICAL TO THE OPERATION'S SUCCESS. EITHER WAY, REQUIRING HIGHER-LEVEL APPROVAL OF TSTs PRESENTS A NEGATIVE IMPLICATION OF CLOSE CONTROL BY INEVITABLY ADDING MORE DECISION TIME TO THE PROCESS THAN IF THE OPERATOR ON THE SCENE COULD MAKE THE CALL. IN OEF, THE PERCEIVED POLITICAL SENSITIVITY OVERRODE THIS CONCERN. THE US LEARNED MANY TST LESSONS IN OEF, LEADING ONE ANALYST TO CLAIM, "IN MANY RESPECTS, AFGHANISTAN SERVED AS A LABORATORY FOR TIME-SENSITIVE TARGETING."<sup>102</sup> THE LESSONS WOULD PAY GREAT DIVIDENDS A YEAR LATER IN IRAQ.

GENERAL FRANKS MADE A CONCENTRATED EFFORT TO AVOID UNNECESSARY LOSS OF CIVILIAN LIFE, BEYOND THE STANDARD REQUIREMENT OF THE LAW OF ARMED CONFLICT. DESCRIBING HUMANITARIAN OPERATIONS NEAR KANDAHAR IN LATE NOVEMBER, GENERAL FRANKS STATED:

EVERY DAY, WE HAVE ASSETS WATCH THOSE [ROADS], AND THE FIRST THING THAT'S REQUIRED IS, WHEN ONE SEES VEHICLES MOVING, IS TO DETERMINE WHETHER THOSE VEHICLES BELONG TO FRIENDS OR FOES. AS YOU KNOW, WE MOVE AN AWFUL LOT OF HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE UP AND DOWN THESE ROUTES INSIDE AFGHANISTAN, AND I THINK YOU'LL AGREE THAT WE'VE EXERCISED EVERY CAUTION TO BE SURE THAT WE DIDN'T BOMB THOSE.<sup>103</sup>

EVEN IN SCENARIOS WHERE COMMANDERS MAY NOT BE AS RESTRICTED FROM PROSECUTING THE ENEMY, US EFFORTS TO BEGIN HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE SIMULTANEOUSLY WITH COMBAT OPERATIONS

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<sup>100</sup> Grant, "An Air War Like No Other," 34.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

<sup>102</sup> Andrew Krepevech, "Operation Iraqi Freedom: A First-Blush Assessment," Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessment, Washington, D.C., 2003, 16.

<sup>103</sup> Grant, "Reach-Forward," 46.

HINDERED GENERAL FRANKS' ABILITY TO AGGRESSIVELY CONDUCT THE WAR. THIS 'SELF-INDUCED' POLITICAL CONSTRAINT HAS JUST AS MUCH, IF NOT MORE, AFFECT ON HOW LEADERS CHOOSE TO EXECUTE AIR POWER, LEADING DR REBECCA GRANT TO CONCLUDE, "THE LEVEL OF CAUTION AND OF DIRECT TACTICAL CONTROL IN ENDURING FREEDOM SURPASSED OTHER RECENT OPERATIONS."<sup>104</sup> MUCH LIKE OPERATION ALLIED FORCE, SENIOR LEADERS IN OEF NECESSARILY DECIDED THE LEVEL OF POLITICAL INFLUENCE FIRST AND THEN DETERMINED WHAT ACTIONS NEEDED TO BE TAKEN.

**CHANGING NATURE OF US WARFARE.** ONE OF THE PRIMARY STRATEGIC CONCERNS IN AFGHANISTAN WAS TO BUILD AND MAINTAIN THE CONFIDENCE OF THE NORTHERN ALLIANCE TO ENABLE THEM TO CONDUCT THE MAIN EFFORT OF THE GROUND FIGHTING. THE ABILITY TO ASSIST A GROUND COMMANDER IN AN EXPEDITIOUS MANNER ONLY SERVED TO STRENGTHEN THAT COMMANDER'S CONFIDENCE IN THE AIR SUPPORT SYSTEM. AS WITH MANY STRATEGIC EFFECTS, THE INDIRECT BENEFIT WAS NOT DIRECTLY MEASURABLE, BUT MAY HAVE BEEN CRITICAL.

FOR OEF AS A WHOLE, TACTICAL EFFICIENCY WAS NOT A PRIORITY. WHILE RESOURCES WERE LIMITED IN THE FIRST FEW DAYS OF THE OPERATION, THE US OVERCAME THE GEOGRAPHIC CHALLENGES QUICKLY AND PROVIDED AIR SUPPORT TO THE SOF ELEMENTS ON THE GROUND. THESE SOF TEAMS COMBINED WITH THE CAOC'S "DELIVERY OF 'ON-CALL' AIRPOWER PROVED TO BE THE RIGHT OPERATIONAL CONCEPT FOR UNSEATING THE TALIBAN."<sup>105</sup> THE CAOC CAREFULLY ORCHESTRATED THE OPERATION TO HAVE AIR ASSETS OVER THE BATTLEFIELD 24 HOURS A DAY WITHIN SELECTED 'ENGAGEMENT ZONES.'<sup>106</sup> FROM THE CAOC, THE JFACC AND HIS STAFF DIRECTED AIRCRAFT TO DIFFERENT ZONES TO STRIKE EMERGING TARGETS. THE INHERENT INEFFICIENCY OF ON-CALL AIR POWER WAS STRATEGICALLY EFFECTIVE IN OEF.

THIS ABUNDANCE OF AIR POWER ALSO NEGATED CONCERNS OVER EFFICIENCY. THE NUMBER OF AIRBORNE AIRCRAFT OFTEN EXCEEDED THE NUMBER OF TARGETS AVAILABLE.<sup>107</sup> IN ADDITION, AS WITH ANY 'ON-CALL' AIR PLATFORM, OFTEN THE MUNITIONS AVAILABLE WERE NOT OPTIMIZED AGAINST THE EMERGING TARGET. THEREFORE, MANY SORTIES WENT UNUTILIZED OR WERE LESS THAN OPTIMALLY EFFECTIVE AGAINST THEIR TARGET. PRIOR TO OPERATION ANACONDA, AIR POWER DELIVERED 'ON-CALL' STRIKES FROM A GENEROUS AMOUNT OF AIRPLANES, BOTH FIGHTER AND BOMBER, OVERHEAD OF KEY GROUND LOCATIONS. AS THE CFACC TRANSITIONED INTO OPERATION ANACONDA, HIS MAJOR CONCERN WAS OVER DECONFLICTION AND COORDINATION. THE LESSONS LEARNED REPORT FROM OPERATION ANACONDA STATED, "THE PROBLEM WASN'T SUPPLY: THERE WERE PLENTY OF US NAVY STRIKE AIRCRAFT, USAF FIGHTERS AND BOMBERS AVAILABLE. COORDINATING IT ALL WOULD BE THE

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<sup>104</sup> Ibid.

<sup>105</sup> Grant, "An Air War Like No Other," 35.

<sup>106</sup> Rebecca Grant, "The War Nobody Expected," *Air Force Magazine*, April 2002, 38.

<sup>107</sup> Cordesman, *Lessons of Afghanistan*, 111.



ISSUE.”<sup>108</sup> IT ALSO STATED, “BOMBERS AND FIGHTERS FREQUENTLY RETURNED TO BASE WITHOUT DROPPING ANY BOMBS.”<sup>109</sup> US HEGEMONIC STATUS ALLOWS FOR SUCH INEFFICIENT OPERATIONS.

**OVERALL.** OEF WAS A CLOSELY CONTROLLED WAR. THE CAOC USED ITS TECHNOLOGICAL CAPABILITY TO CONTROL THE AIR WAR OVER AFGHANISTAN, HOWEVER MANY BELIEVED THAT THE CAOC WAS INFRINGING ON DECENTRALIZED EXECUTION. IN APRIL 2002, DR REBECCA GRANT WROTE, “THE BATTLE FOR CENTRALIZED CONTROL WAS WON WITH RELIANCE ON THE JFACC CONCEPT, BUT ENDURING FREEDOM WITNESSED A NEW CLASH OVER THE CONTINUING NEED FOR DECENTRALIZED EXECUTION.”<sup>110</sup> HOWEVER, THE SECDEF RETAINED APPROVAL AUTHORITY FOR TARGETING AL QAEDA AND TALIBAN LEADERSHIP KNOWING THAT MISTAKES CAUSING INNOCENT AFGHANISTAN CIVILIAN DEATHS COULD LEAD TO STRATEGIC DISASTER. LIKewise, GENERAL FRANKS WITHHELD APPROVAL AUTHORITY ON MANY CONVOYS DUE TO THE VAST AMOUNT OF US-BACKED HUMANITARIAN AID PASSING THROUGH AFGHANISTAN AT THE TIME. THEREFORE, THESE LEADERS ANALYZED THE UNIQUE POLITICAL CALCULUS OF OEF AND CHOSE, OUT OF PERCEIVED NECESSITY, TO CLOSELY CONTROL TACTICAL OPERATIONS.

## **OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM**

OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM PRESENTS SCENARIOS ACROSS THE SPECTRUM FROM CLOSE CONTROL TO AUTONOMOUS OPERATION. THIS STUDY OF OIF DEMONSTRATES THAT ONE MISSION—TIME-SENSITIVE TARGETING—WAS CLOSELY CONTROLLED AT THE OPERATIONAL LEVEL AND ABOVE. THE OTHER AIR POWER MISSIONS VARIED FROM CLOSE CONTROL FROM THE CAOC, SUCH AS WITH PRECISION MUNITION DROPPERS, TO AUTONOMOUS OPERATION AT THE TACTICAL LEVEL, AS WITH CLOSE AIR SUPPORT (CAS). THIS VARIETY OF EMPLOYMENT STYLES, ALL WITHIN THE SAME CONFLICT, DEMONSTRATED THAT DIFFERENT MISSIONS MAY REQUIRE DIFFERENT LEVELS OF CONTROL.

OIF STARTED ON MARCH 19, 2003, WHEN TWO F-117AS AND NUMEROUS TOMAHAWK LAND ATTACK MISSILES (TLAMs) ATTEMPTED TO DECAPITATE IRAQI LEADERSHIP. THEIR UNSUCCESSFUL ATTEMPT AT ENDING THE WAR AS QUICKLY AS IT BEGAN LAUNCHED A JOINT COALITION ATTACK TO TOPPLE THE HUSSEIN REGIME. SPECIFICALLY, ACCORDING TO THE CENTAF DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS, THE AIR OBJECTIVES OF OIF WERE TO “NEUTRALIZE THE REGIME’S ABILITY TO COMMAND FORCES AND GOVERN THEIR STATE, GAIN AND MAINTAIN AIR AND SPACE SUPREMACY, SUPPRESS THE IRAQI TACTICAL BALLISTIC MISSILE THREAT, SUPPORT COALITION SPECIAL OPERATIONS FORCES AND SUPPORT COALITION LAND COMPONENT FORCES.”<sup>111</sup> MAJOR COMBAT OPERATIONS LASTED FROM MARCH 19, 2003, TO MAY 1, 2003, WHEN PRESIDENT BUSH ANNOUNCED THE END OF MAJOR COMBAT OPERATIONS ABOARD THE *USS ABRAHAM LINCOLN*.<sup>112</sup> THE AIR COMPONENT PLAYED A MAJOR ROLE IN LEADING THE COUNTER-

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<sup>108</sup> TFEL, “Operation Anaconda,” 37.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid., 48.

<sup>110</sup> Grant, “The War Nobody Expected,” 38.

<sup>111</sup> Jason L. Haag, “OIF Veterans Discuss Lessons,” *Air Force Print News*, Air Warfare Center Public Affairs, 31 July 2003, on-line, Internet, 1 May 2005, available from <http://www.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/af/20030731news-oif.htm>.

<sup>112</sup> George W. Bush, Remarks aboard the *USS Abraham Lincoln*, 1 May 2003.

SCUD EFFORT IN WESTERN IRAQ, ENABLING THE CREATION OF THE EVENTUAL NORTHERN FRONT, AND SUPPORTING BOTH OF THE GROUND ADVANCES FROM THE SOUTH BY PROTECTING THEIR EXPOSED FLANKS DURING THEIR RAPID FORWARD MOVEMENT TO BAGHDAD.<sup>113</sup> ALL THE WHILE, STRATEGIC AIR AND TST STRIKES PURSUED AN EFFECTS-BASED STRATEGY OF DECAPITATING THE IRAQI LEADERSHIP AND ISOLATING THEM FROM THEIR FIELDED FORCES.

FRESH FROM THE OEF EXPERIENCE AND ELEVEN-PLUS YEARS PATROLLING THE NO-FLY ZONES, THE AIR COMPONENT WAS REMARKABLY WELL PREPARED FOR THE INITIATION OF OIF. GENERAL MOSELEY CONTINUED TO FUNCTION AS THE CFACC AND GENERAL FRANKS REMAINED THE CFC. GENERAL MOSELEY CONDUCTED OIF AIR OPERATIONS FROM PRINCE SULTAN AIR BASE, SAUDI ARABIA, AND SHIFTED THE CONTINUING MISSIONS FOR OEF TO THE CAOC AT AL UDEID AIR BASE IN QATAR. FOR OIF, "THE MAJORITY OF CAOC PERSONNEL WERE EITHER EXPERTS IN THEIR FIELD OR HAD PREVIOUS CAOC EXPERIENCE. IN FACT, APPROXIMATELY 90 PERCENT OF ALL TARGETING PERSONNEL THAT WORKED IN THE CAOC DURING OIF WERE HAND PICKED PRIOR TO THE CONFLICT."<sup>114</sup> THEREFORE, THE CAPABILITY OF THE CAOC FAR SURPASSED PREVIOUS LEVELS AND STOOD MORE READY THAN EVER AT INITIATION OF DECISIVE COMBAT OPERATIONS IN IRAQ.

**TECHNOLOGY.** TECHNOLOGY CONTINUED TO EVOLVE FROM OEF TO OIF. THE COMMAND AND CONTROL STRUCTURE WAS ALSO MORE PREPARED THAN IN OEF, SINCE ALL MAJOR PLAYERS WERE IN PLACE PRIOR TO THE OFFICIAL BEGINNING OF THE CONFLICT. GENERAL FRANKS MOVED HIS CFC HEADQUARTERS FORWARD TO QATAR. THE CFLCC SET UP HIS HEADQUARTERS IN KUWAIT AND THE CFMCC ESTABLISHED HIS HEADQUARTERS IN BAHRAIN. ALTHOUGH GEOGRAPHICALLY SEPARATED, THE CONNECTIVITY BETWEEN THESE HEADQUARTERS HAD INCREASED SINCE THE BEGINNING OF OEF. COMMANDERS NOW USED WORLDWIDE VTCs AND ONLINE CHAT ROOMS TO PASS INFORMATION AND PROVIDE ROUND-THE-CLOCK VISIBILITY FROM SENIOR LEADERS ALL THE WAY BACK TO THE US.<sup>115</sup> THESE SYSTEMS PROVED CRUCIAL TO PROVIDING REAL-TIME INFORMATION TO BOTH COMMANDERS AND THEIR TROOPS. IN ADDITION, THE AIR COMPONENT PROVIDED AIR COMPONENT COORDINATION ELEMENTS (ACCE) TO LIAISE WITH EACH OF THE COMPONENTS TO SUPPLEMENT ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION AND BUILD PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS.<sup>116</sup> THIS EXCEPTIONAL "CONNECTIVITY AND INTERCONNECTIVITY WE HAVE BETWEEN THE LAND AND MARITIME AND AIR COMPONENTS" CREATED AVENUES FOR GREATER REAL-TIME FLEXIBILITY.<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>113</sup> Rebecca Grant, "Hand in Glove," *Air Force Magazine*, July 2003, 35.

<sup>114</sup> TASK FORCE ENDURING LOOK, "OIF VOLUME II: SHAPING THE BATTLESPACE AND DECISIVE OPERATIONS FROM 19 MARCH – 30 APRIL 2003," UNCLASSIFIED EXCERPT, MARCH 2004, 1-14. QUOTED FROM DOUGLAS J. NIKOLAI, "CENTRALIZED EXECUTION OF USAF AIR AND SPACE FORCES: THE UNSPOKEN TREND OF THE MASTER TENET," MONTEREY, CAL., NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL, UNPUBLISHED MASTER'S THESIS, SEPTEMBER 2004, 56.

<sup>115</sup> John D. Gresham, "New and Improved: The Weapons of Iraqi Freedom," in *Operation Iraqi Freedom* (Tampa, Fla.: Faircourt LLC, 2003), 99.

<sup>116</sup> Grant, *The First 600 Days of Combat*, 96-7.

<sup>117</sup> Anthony H. Cordesman, *The Iraq War: Strategy, Tactics, and Military Lessons* (Washington, D.C.: The CSIS Press, 2003), 274.

THE UNITED STATES BECAME MORE PROFICIENT AT UTILIZING ITS TECHNOLOGY TO APPLY AIR POWER. THE CAOC APPLIED ITS C4ISR SYSTEMS “IN A FORM OF JOINT WARFARE THAT HAD AN UNPARALLELED DEGREE OF NEAR-REAL-TIME SITUATIONAL AWARENESS THAT SHORTENED THE ‘KILL CHAIN’ IN GOING FROM TARGETING TO STRIKE, AND THE SENSOR-TO-SHOOTER GAP FROM DAYS AND HOURS IN THE GULF WAR TO HOURS AND MINUTES IN THE IRAQ WAR.”<sup>118</sup> SPECIFICALLY, THE COMBINATION OF UAVs, GPS-GUIDED MUNITIONS, AND INCREASED CONNECTIVITY LED TO AN IMPRESSIVE CAPABILITY IN PROSECUTING TSTs. IN ONE AIR ATTACK AGAINST THE INFAMOUS ‘CHEMICAL ALI,’ THE TST CELL REVIEWED VIDEO IMAGE OF THE VILLAGE AND APPROVED AN F-16 TO STRIKE THE VILLA. THIS PROCESS, INCLUDING OBTAINING THE DECISION TO STRIKE FOR THE ENGAGEMENT AUTHORITY, TOOK LESS THAN THIRTY MINUTES.<sup>119</sup> ALTOGETHER IN OIF, THE TST CELL PROSECUTED 156 TSTs—SPECIFICALLY DEFINED AS TARGETS THAT INCLUDED LEADERSHIP, WEAPONS OF MASS DESTRUCTION, OR TERRORISTS—AND 686 ‘DYNAMIC’ TARGETS, DEFINED AS ALL OTHER TIME-SENSITIVE TARGETS NOT MEETING THE CRITERIA LISTED ABOVE.<sup>120</sup> THESE STRIKES DEMONSTRATED THE INCREASING MATURITY OF THE TIME-SENSITIVE TARGETING PROCESS, PROVIDING AN OVERALL AVERAGE RESPONSE TIME OF 45 MINUTES.<sup>121</sup> SOME TOOK AS LITTLE AS TWENTY MINUTES FROM TST CELL NOTIFICATION TO TARGET DESTRUCTION.<sup>122</sup>

THE CFACC HAD CONTROL OF MOST OF THE AIR POWER ASSETS AND THE ATO DROVE EXECUTION FROM THE SUPPORTED EFFORT IN THE WEST TO THE SUPPORTING EFFORTS IN THE EAST, SOUTH, AND NORTH. THE CAOC EVENTUALLY GREW FROM A PRE-OIF TOTAL OF 672 PERSONNEL TO A MARCH 2003 TOTAL OF 1,966 PERSONNEL TO START THE WAR.<sup>123</sup> OF THE ALMOST 2,000 INDIVIDUALS IN THE CAOC FOR OIF, ABOUT 43 PERCENT HAD OFFICIAL AOC TRAINING.<sup>124</sup> THE SHEER POWER OF THE LARGEST CAOC SEEN-TO-DATE ALLOWED GENERAL MOSELEY OPERATIONAL FLEXIBILITY PREVIOUSLY UNSEEN. GENERAL MOSELEY WAS EVEN DESCRIBED AS “THE QUARTERBACK OF THE OPERATION, CALLING AUDIBLES IN RESPONSE TO CHANGING CIRCUMSTANCES.”<sup>125</sup> THESE TECHNOLOGICAL CAPABILITIES ENABLED HIM TO CLOSELY CONTROL AIR POWER IN TST AND OTHER OPERATIONS.

**POLITICAL INFLUENCE.** THE POLITICAL SENSITIVITY FOR OIF WAS EXTREMELY HIGH FOR NUMEROUS REASONS. INTERNATIONAL SUPPORT FOR THE INVASION OF IRAQ WAS SIGNIFICANTLY LESS THAN THE SUPPORT FOR THE INVASION OF AFGHANISTAN. COUPLED WITH DECREASED DOMESTIC SUPPORT THAN FROM THE INITIATION OF OEF, COMMANDERS FACED NUMEROUS POLITICAL HURDLES WITH THE INVASION OF IRAQ BY TRYING TO WIN THE ‘HEARTS AND MINDS’ OF THE POPULATION WHILE

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<sup>118</sup> Ibid., 219.

<sup>119</sup> Krepenovich, 17.

<sup>120</sup> T. Michael Moseley, “Operation Iraqi Freedom—By the Numbers,” CENTAF Assessment and Analysis Division, 30 April 2003, 9.

<sup>121</sup> Milan N. Vego, “Learning from Victory” *Proceedings of the US Naval Institute*, vol. 129, no. 8, August 2003, 33.

<sup>122</sup> Krepenovich, 17.

<sup>123</sup> Moseley, “OIF—By the Numbers,” 3.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid.

<sup>125</sup> Cordesman, *The Iraq War*, 67.

TOPPLING THE REGIME. ANDREW KREPENEVICH, DIRECTOR OF THE CENTER FOR STRATEGIC AND BUDGETARY ASSESSMENTS, SUMMARIZED THEIR CHALLENGE:

IN RECENT YEARS, THE US HAS WAGED WAR AGAINST REGIMES, NOT NATIONS. CONSEQUENTLY, THE US MILITARY HAD THE MISSION OF DEFEATING THE ENEMY REGIME WITHOUT ALIENATING THE POPULATION, SO AS TO FACILITATE POSTWAR RECONSTRUCTION AND STABILITY OPERATIONS. KEY TO ACHIEVING THIS OBJECTIVE WAS LIMITING NONCOMBATANT CASUALTIES AND DAMAGE TO THE TARGET STATE'S INFRASTRUCTURE. TO DO THIS, THE US-LED COALITION HAD TO STRIKE WITH DISCRIMINATION AND MOVE WITH GREAT SPEED. ADVANCED INTELLIGENCE, RECONNAISSANCE AND SURVEILLANCE CAPABILITIES PROVED CRITICAL TO IDENTIFYING MILITARY TARGETS. THE WIDESPREAD USE OF PRECISION GUIDED MUNITIONS (PGMs) ENABLED DISCRIMINATE STRIKES, MINIMIZING THE LOSS OF NONCOMBATANT LIVES AND SPARING MUCH OF IRAQ'S ECONOMIC INFRASTRUCTURE.<sup>126</sup>

AS GENERAL MOSELEY NOTED, "THE SENSITIVITY THAT THE CINC [GENERAL FRANKS] AND ALL OF US HAVE AS COMPONENT COMMANDERS IS TO ABSOLUTELY TOTALLY MINIMIZE THE COLLATERAL DAMAGE AND ABSOLUTELY TOTALLY MINIMIZE THE EFFECT ON THE CIVILIAN POPULATION."<sup>127</sup> THE COALITION COULD ILL AFFORD ANOTHER AL FIRDOS BUNKER INCIDENT OF OPERATION DESERT STORM. IN FACT, THE ONLY EVEN QUASI-COMPARABLE EVENT WAS WHEN A MISSILE STRUCK AN OPEN-AIR MARKET CAUSING FORTY CASUALTIES. IRAQ IMMEDIATELY BLAMED THE EVENT ON THE UNITED STATES, BUT SOME SOURCES LATER CLAIMED THAT THIS WAS "PROBABLY ACCOMPLISHED BY AN UNGUIDED IRAQI SAM [SURFACE-TO-AIR MISSILE] THAT FELL TO EARTH AFTER RUNNING OUT OF FUEL."<sup>128</sup> FORTUNATELY, THE UNITED STATES WAS POLITICALLY UNSCATHED BY THE INCIDENT.

AS IN OEF, LAWYERS AGAIN PROVED CRITICAL IN CAREFULLY VETTING EACH TARGET TO BE STRUCK. TO ENSURE THAT AIR POWER WOULD NOT ADVERSELY AFFECT THE OVERALL STRATEGY, BY THE BEGINNING OF OIF "EVERY INCH OF BAGHDAD HAD BEEN COMBED AND EVALUATED TO BUILD A DATABASE OF COLLATERAL DAMAGE METRICS FOR POTENTIAL TARGETS. GIVEN THAT THE CFACC DATABASE ULTIMATELY GREW TO OVER 25,000 DMPIS FOR ALL TYPES OF TARGETS, THIS WAS NO MEAN FEAT."<sup>129</sup> THE AIR COMPONENT'S ATTEMPT TO SAVE LIVES AND MINIMIZE DAMAGE WAS ULTIMATELY SUCCESSFUL. THE CAOC EFFECTIVELY CHOSE "THE MUNITIONS AND ANGLE OF ATTACK THAT COULD DESTROY THE TARGET TO THE POINT NECESSARY TO PRODUCE THE DESIRED EFFECT, BUT TO DO SO USING THE SMALLEST MUNITION AND THE ANGLE AND POINT OF ATTACK THAT WOULD PRODUCE MINIMAL RISK TO CIVILIANS AND COLLATERAL DAMAGE."<sup>130</sup> GENERAL FRANKS APPLAUDED THESE EFFORTS: "I THINK YOU HAVE SEEN TIME AND TIME AGAIN MILITARY TARGETS FALL WHILE THE CIVILIAN INFRASTRUCTURE REMAINS IN PLACE. AND IT'S THE SAME WITH CIVILIAN LIVES."<sup>131</sup> SECRETARY RUMSFELD ALSO DEFENDED

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<sup>126</sup> Krepenovich, ii.

<sup>127</sup> Grant, "Hand in Glove," 33.

<sup>128</sup> WILLIAMSON MURRAY AND ROBERT H. SCALES, JR., *THE IRAQ WAR* (CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS: HARVARD UNIVERSITY PRESS, 2003), 179-180.

<sup>129</sup> Grant, *The First 600 Days of Combat*, 113.

<sup>130</sup> Cordesman, *The Iraq War*, 257.

<sup>131</sup> Tommy R. Franks, Remarks at a USCENTCOM Press Conference, 30 March 2003.

COALITION EFFORTS: “THE TARGETING CAPABILITIES AND THE CARE THAT GOES INTO TARGETING TO SEE THAT THE PRECISE TARGETS ARE STRUCK AND THAT OTHER TARGETS ARE NOT STRUCK IS AS IMPRESSIVE AS ANYONE COULD SEE.”<sup>132</sup> SUCH HIGH-LEVEL EMPHASIS SPEAKS VOLUMES TO THE PERCEIVED POLITICAL SENSITIVITY FACING SENIOR LEADERS AS THEY UNLEASHED AIR POWER TO DEFEAT THE REGIME WHILE MAINTAINING THE SUPPORT OF THE POPULATION.

**CHANGING NATURE OF US WARFARE.** TACTICAL EFFICIENCY WAS AGAIN A SECONDARY CONCERN IN OIF. PRIMARY MISSIONS, SUCH AS CAS, TST, AND THE ANTI-THEATER BALLISTIC MISSILE (TBM) HUNT, ALL CONSISTED OF PROVIDING AN ABUNDANCE OF AIR POWER IN HOPES THAT IT WOULD BE USED. DR REBECCA GRANT DESCRIBED THIS ON-CALL AIR POWER AS PERSISTENT PRECISION: “JUST AS IMPORTANT AS PRECISION WAS ITS PARTNER—PERSISTENCE.”<sup>133</sup> HOWEVER, THIS PERSISTENCE COMES AT A DIRECT COST IN TERMS OF EFFICIENCY. THE ON-CALL PRESENCE OF AIR POWER COMBINED WITH THE SENSITIVE NATURE OF TST AND DYNAMIC TARGETS ALLOWED LEADERS TO EMPLOY REAL-TIME EFFECTS-BASED OPERATIONS TO ACHIEVE STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES. FROM THE OUTSET OF OIF, THE SECDEF DIRECTED MILITARY COMMANDERS TO USE ALL THE MEANS ALLOTTED IN THE MANNER THEY SAW FIT TO ACHIEVE THE STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES. FOR EXAMPLE, THE CFACC’S ANTI-TBM MISSION IN WESTERN IRAQ DEDICATED OVER 75 STRIKE AIRCRAFT TO A SINGLE MISSION.<sup>134</sup> WHILE UNUSUAL AND HIGHLY INEFFICIENT, IT ALLOWED THE CFACC TO “HOLD” WESTERN IRAQ FOR THE JFC. IN ADDITION, THESE STRIKE ASSETS WERE OFTEN RE-ROLLED TO NEW TARGETS BY THE CAOC IF THEIR ORDNANCE WAS NOT NEEDED IN THE WEST.<sup>135</sup> THESE EFFECTS-BASED CLOSELY CONTROLLED OPERATIONS SUCCESSFULLY ACHIEVED DECISIVE COMBAT OBJECTIVES AT THE EXPENSE OF EFFICIENCY.

THE ABUNDANCE OF AIR POWER FOR OIF ENABLED THIS INEFFICIENT USE OF FORCE. THE CENTCOM CHIEF OF STRATEGY FROM OIF STATED, “NEVER IN THE HISTORY OF WARFARE HAS THIS MUCH PRECISION AIR POWER BEEN APPLIED IN SUCH A COMPRESSED PERIOD OF TIME.”<sup>136</sup> WHILE PRECISION DOES INCREASE EFFICIENCY AND MAY DIRECTLY INCREASE TACTICAL EFFECTIVENESS, IT DOES NOT NECESSARILY INCREASE STRATEGIC EFFECTIVENESS. THE PRECISION CAPABILITY OF THE US MILITARY INCREASED ITS EFFICIENCY, IN TERMS OF SORTIES PER TARGET, DMPIS PER SORTIE, ETC. HOWEVER, ONE MUST STRIKE THE CORRECT TARGETS IN ORDER TO BE EFFECTIVE, WHICH IS A QUITE DIFFERENT MEASURE. ANOTHER REPORT ALSO BRAGGED ABOUT USING ONLY HALF OF THE NUMBER OF AIRPLANES DURING OIF THAN DESERT STORM.<sup>137</sup> AGAIN, THIS FOCUS ON EFFICIENCY MAY BE DUE TO ITS EASE OF MEASUREMENT, BUT THE APPLICATION OF EFFECT-BASED OPERATIONS WAS SUPPOSED TO ALLOW MATURATION BEYOND MEASURING EFFICIENCY TO MEASURING EFFECTIVENESS. LASTLY, THE FACT THAT TSTs ARE JUDGED BY THE ‘CYCLE-TIME’ IT TOOK TO MAKE THE DECISION AND STRIKE THE

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<sup>132</sup> Donald H. Rumsfeld, Remarks at a DOD Press Conference, 21 March 2003.

<sup>133</sup> Robert S. Dudley, “The Airman’s Lessons,” *Air Force Magazine*, October 2004, 2.

<sup>134</sup> Grant, *The First 600 Days of Combat*, 108.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid.

<sup>136</sup> Toby Harnden, “‘Fight Light, Fight Fast’ Theory Advances,” *London Daily Telegraph*, 14 April 2003, 1.

<sup>137</sup> Moseley, “OIF—By the Numbers,” 6.

TARGET, SHOWS THAT EFFICIENCY IS AN IMPORTANT PART OF EFFECTIVENESS. WHEN LEADERSHIP CHOOSES TO RETAIN APPROVAL AUTHORITY FOR TSTs, ONE MUST ASSUME THAT A CORRECT DECISION IS VALUED OVER A QUICK DECISION OR AUTHORITY WOULD HAVE BEEN DELEGATED IN THE FIRST PLACE. WHILE SPEED IN WARFARE IS OBVIOUSLY IMPORTANT, TOUGH DECISIONS TAKE TIME. AFTER ALL, A QUICK BAD DECISION IS SIMPLY A BAD DECISION REACHED IN LESS TIME.<sup>138</sup> ONLY OVERWHELMING FIREPOWER ALLOWED FOR THESE INEFFICIENCIES IN OIF.

**OVERALL.** THE US NEED TO MINIMIZE CIVILIAN CASUALTIES AND PRESERVE KEY INFRASTRUCTURE DROVE THE LEADERS OF OIF TO CHOOSE CLOSE CONTROL FOR THE MAJORITY OF AIR POWER MISSIONS. THE DECAPITATION STRIKE AT DORA FARMS WAS CLOSELY CONTROLLED WITH APPROVAL COMING DIRECTLY FROM THE PRESIDENT JUST HOURS BEFORE THE FIRST BOMBS IMPACTED. OTHER THAN CAS, THE OVERALL AIR MISSION CONSISTED LARGELY OF TST AND DYNAMICS TARGETS FLOWING INTO AND OUT OF THE CAOC TO 'ON-CALL' PLATFORMS WAITING FOR TARGETS. THE LEVEL OF INTEREST VARIED ACCORDING TO THE TARGET, WITH THE MOST IMPORTANT TARGETS—LEADERSHIP, WMD, AND TERRORISTS—REQUIRING A HIGHER APPROVAL AUTHORITY. THE CAOC CLOSELY CONTROLLED AIR POWER THROUGH EITHER THE AIR TASKING ORDER FOR PRECISION-GUIDED MUNITIONS DROPPERS OR REAL-TIME FOR DEDICATED TST PLATFORMS.

THIS ANALYSIS OF OIF ONLY COVERED THE PERIOD OF MAJOR COMBAT OPERATIONS FOR AIR POWER. HOWEVER, THE RESULTING COUNTERINSURGENCY CAMPAIGN PAINTS A SIMILAR PICTURE. A COMBINATION OF 'ON-CALL' AIR PLATFORMS LOADED COMBINED WITH ROAMING UAVS PRESENT AN INEFFICIENT, YET EFFECTIVE SUPPORTING ARM TO THE COUNTERINSURGENCY WAGED ON THE GROUND. IN FACT, MANY HAVE SUGGESTED THE SITUATION ON THE GROUND WAS A RESULT OF HOW COMMANDERS HANDLED THE MAJOR COMBAT OPERATIONS. ANDREW KREPENEVICH WRITES, "HENCE, THE US MILITARY'S PREFERENCE TO DO WHAT IT DOES BEST—DEFEAT ENEMY FORCES IN THE FIELD AND THEN QUICKLY DEPART—MUST BE OVERCOME. THE PRACTICE OF CRAFTING QUICK EXIT STRATEGIES MUST YIELD TO A WILLINGNESS TO DEVELOP A COMPREHENSIVE STRATEGY FOR WINNING BOTH THE WAR AND THE POST CONFLICT PERIOD THAT FOLLOWS."<sup>139</sup> FOR THE UNITED STATES TO ACHIEVE ITS STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES IN IRAQ, OPERATORS CAN EXPECT SENIOR LEADERS TO CONTINUE TO CLOSELY CONTROL MOST MISSIONS IN AN ATTEMPT TO CONTROL CRITICAL STRATEGIC EFFECTS.

## CONCLUSION

THESE THREE CASE STUDIES REPRESENT DIFFERENT CONFLICTS THAT RELIED HEAVILY ON CLOSE CONTROL. ONE REPRESENTS A SCENARIO OF EXTREME POLITICAL INFLUENCE. OEF DEMONSTRATED THAT, EVEN WITH BROAD INTERNATIONAL SUPPORT, THE UNITED STATES MUST TAKE GREAT CARE IN MINIMIZING CIVILIAN CASUALTIES IN ACCOMPLISHING ITS OBJECTIVES. OIF SHOWED THAT

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<sup>138</sup> MICHAEL P. NOONAN, "THE MILITARY LESSONS OF OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM," E-NOTES FROM THE FOREIGN POLICY RESEARCH INSTITUTE, 1 MAY 2003, ON-LINE, INTERNET, 5 MAY 2005, AVAILABLE FROM [HTTP://WWW.FPRI.ORG/ENOTES/20030501.MILITARYLESSONSIRAQIFREEDOM.HTML](http://www.fpri.org/enotes/20030501.militarylessonsiraqifreedom.html).

<sup>139</sup> Krepenovich, 8.

AIR POWER MUST ALSO TAKE GREAT CARE TO NOT DESTROY KEY INFRASTRUCTURE AND UPSET THE VERY POPULATION WHOSE HEARTS AND MINDS IT IS TRYING TO WIN. CLOSE CONTROL, WHERE POSSIBLE, WAS THE METHOD OF CHOICE FOR MANY MISSIONS IN ALL THREE OF THESE CONFLICTS.

THE UNITED STATE'S UNIQUE POSITION AS THE HEGEMON, COMBINED WITH LIMITED OBJECTIVES, DECREASED THE NEED FOR AUTONOMOUS OPERATIONS. HEGEMONIC STATUS EQUALS AN ABUNDANCE OF POWER, WHICH IN TURN, DECREASES THE CONCERN OVER EFFICIENCY. SURPLUS AIR POWER ALLOWS FIGHTERS TO PATROL THE UNITED STATES, LYING IN WAIT FOR THE NEXT HIJACKED AIRLINER. EXTRA AIR POWER ENABLES THE CFACC TO OFFER 'ON-CALL' AIR POWER TO SUPPORT GROUND FORCES IN AFGHANISTAN. AN ABUNDANCE OF AIR POWER ALLOWS SENIOR LEADERS TO CLOSELY CONTROL TIME-SENSITIVE TARGETS IN IRAQ. AUTONOMOUS OPERATIONS, WHICH AIM AT SQUEEZING EVERY BIT OF CAPABILITY FROM A LIMITED NUMBER OF ASSETS IN THE 'TRADITIONAL AMERICAN WAY OF WAR,' ARE NO LONGER NECESSARY IN TODAY'S CONFLICTS.

DOMESTIC SUPPORT REPRESENTS ONLY ONE OF A NUMBER OF SOURCES FOR THE INCREASED POLITICAL SENSITIVITY OF RECENT CONFLICTS. SELLING THE HOMELAND DEFENSE MISSION TO THE US PUBLIC WAS EASY. US CITIZENS WANT TO SEE COMBAT AIR PATROLS OVER MAJOR CITIES AND MAJOR PUBLIC EVENTS. WITH AFGHANISTAN, SELLING REVENGE WAS EASY. COMBINED WITH THE IDEA THAT TERRORISM IS EVERYBODY'S PROBLEM, A COALITION QUICKLY EMERGED. HOWEVER, THE FRAGILE RELATIONSHIP WITH THE INTERNATIONAL MUSLIM COMMUNITY DROVE LEADERS TO USE EXTREME CAUTION. IN CONTRAST, AFTER AN OVERESTIMATION OF IRAQ'S WEAPONS OF MASS DESTRUCTION CAPABILITY, THE UNITED STATES ENCOUNTERED DIFFICULTY IN BUILDING AND THEN MAINTAINING A COALITION. FOR ALL THREE OF THESE MILITARY OPERATIONS, THESE POLITICAL INFLUENCES CAUSED SENIOR LEADERS TO TREAD CAUTIOUSLY WHEN EMPLOYING MILITARY POWER. WHEN ONE SIGNIFICANT MISSTEP CAN DERAIL AN ENTIRE STRATEGY, EXPECT THE STRATEGIST TO BECOME INVOLVED. THE CONTEXT HAS CHANGED SIGNIFICANTLY FROM VAN CREVELD'S DAY. IN THE FUTURE, ONE SHOULD EXPECT SENIOR LEADERS TO CLOSELY CONTROL TACTICAL EVENTS.

## CHAPTER 4

### IMPLICATIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS

*ADHERENCE TO DOGMA HAS DESTROYED MORE ARMIES AND COST MORE BATTLES THAN ANYTHING ELSE IN WAR.*

*-- J. F. C. FULLER*

My research demonstrates a divergence between doctrine and reality. Doctrine still teaches the primacy of centralized control and decentralized execution, while recent operations demonstrate that this is rarely the case. The debate over decentralized versus centralized execution reduces quickly to an argument of whether the situation calls for autonomous operations or close control. History has shown that selecting either as the absolute answer is incorrect, since there are many scenarios where the ‘best way to employ air power’ has slid along the spectrum depending on the contextual factors.

NOT ALL READERS OF THIS THESIS WILL AGREE WHETHER CENTRALIZED OR DECENTRALIZED EXECUTION IS THE RIGHT ANSWER. THIS IS BECAUSE YOUR VIEW OF CENTRALIZED EXECUTION DEPENDS LARGELY ON WHERE YOU SIT. SENIOR LEADERS MAY SAY THAT OPERATORS DO NOT ADEQUATELY UNDERSTAND POLITICAL RESTRAINTS AND THAT MAY BE TRUE. HOWEVER, ONE SHOULD NOT CONCLUDE THAT OPERATORS ARE NOT SMART ENOUGH TO MAKE ON-THE-SPOT DECISIONS. MOST OPERATORS AT THE TACTICAL LEVEL SIMPLY LACK THE POLITICAL TRAINING TO FULLY DIGEST THE SITUATION. A MORE THOROUGH UNDERSTANDING OF THE POLITICAL INFLUENCE ON A MILITARY OPERATION WILL ALLOW ALL INDIVIDUALS INVOLVED—LEADERS AND OPERATORS—TO ACT ACCORDING TO THE SITUATION.

#### IMPLICATIONS

The implications of misinterpreting/misunderstanding/misapplying doctrine are large. In 2003, the Air Force further clouded the issue by including the previously taboo term of centralized execution into its basic doctrine.<sup>140</sup> Present day doctrine dictates that execution authority will sometimes be retained at the highest levels, but still maintains (erroneously) that centralized control and decentralized execution are the best way to employ air power.<sup>141</sup> The doctrinally misused term of ‘decentralized execution’ raises concerns about over-controlling. Doctrine also attempts to illustrate that political sensitivities and increased technological capabilities have led to the tendency to centrally execute. However, the ‘centralized execution’ terminology is equally incorrect. The truth is that the heightening of political sensitivities and our increased ability to direct from afar has led to *closely controlling* air power. This subtle difference in terminology is increasingly important. While doctrine will never be purely correct, it requires further clarification to guide air power leaders and operators alike in the increasingly complex employment of air power in the future.

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<sup>140</sup> AFDD 1, 2003, 30.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid., 28.



THIS DISCUSSION OVER WHAT SOME WOULD REFER TO AS “SIMPLE SEMANTICS” IS GROUNDED IN THE STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES SOUGHT WHEN EMPLOYING AIR POWER. THE JOINT FORCE AIR COMPONENT COMMANDER (JFACC) IS RESPONSIBLE FOR EMPLOYING AIR POWER TO ACHIEVE STRATEGIC EFFECTIVENESS. THEREFORE, THE TREND TOWARD CLOSE CONTROL (OR AS DOCTRINE STATES, CENTRALIZED EXECUTION) STEMS FROM THE DESIRE TO CONTROL THE STRATEGIC EFFECTS CREATED BY TACTICAL OPERATIONS. AIR FORCE LEADERS SEEM TO UNDERSTAND THIS WHILE TACTICAL OPERATORS DO NOT. THE REASONS FOR THIS ARE TWOFOLD. FIRST AND FOREMOST, DOCTRINE IS TO BLAME FOR MISLEADING TACTICAL OPERATORS INTO BELIEVING THAT DECENTRALIZED EXECUTION IS ACTUALLY AUTONOMOUS OPERATION. SECOND, THE AIR FORCE TRAINS ALMOST EXCLUSIVELY FOR TACTICAL EFFICIENCY. THIS TRAINING, COMBINED WITH THE BACKDROP OF DOCTRINE, LEADS THE WAR FIGHTER TO BELIEVE TACTICAL EFFICIENCY IS CRITICAL TO STRATEGIC EFFECTIVENESS, WHEN IN ACTUALITY THE TWO MAY BE ENTIRELY UNRELATED IN COMBAT. THEREFORE, THE QUESTION BECOMES WHAT TYPE OF CONFLICT CAN THE US EXPECT TO FIGHT IN THE FUTURE? THE SCENARIO CODIFIED IN DOCTRINE IS FOR A WAR OF DECREASED POLITICAL INFLUENCE. I CONTEND THAT FUTURE CONFLICTS WILL MORE CLOSELY RESEMBLE THE KOSOVO SCENARIO THAN THE ‘TRADITIONAL’ COLD WAR STYLE CONFLICTS UPON WHICH DOCTRINE IS BASED.

## **Recommendations**

Air Force doctrine is still a slave to the master tenet of air power and the Air Force should abandon this bumper sticker slogan. Future JFACCs will determine the appropriate level of control required in their situation, and operators should not be surprised if the JFACC chooses to closely control tactical operations. While the Air Force struggled to be different for many years, it is time for the Air Force to employ its specific form of power in the same manner as other services. Assumptions that were born during the Cold War no longer apply. Flexibility at the operational level is now possible and preferable to flexibility at the tactical level. Moreover, tactical efficiency is no longer required for effectiveness. While tactical efficiency is of course desirable, leaders often have to sacrifice efficiency for operational (or preferably strategic) effectiveness. The Air Force’s pride in its tactical efficiency need not stand in the way of the evolution of air power. In addition, other forms of power—land, sea, and space—do not have a master tenet. Air power is no different. Every execution situation will be different, so different execution methods will be required. Joint doctrine advocates centralized planning and direction, leaving the ‘how to’ execute to commanders. The Air Force would do well to follow suit. After all, command is an art, not a science.

## **THE AIR POWER CONTROL MODEL**

THE SAME COGNITIVE QUALITIES THAT ENABLE US WARFIGHTERS TO BE TACTICALLY PROFICIENT AND ALSO EFFICIENT, HOWEVER, COULD ALSO ALLOW THE SAME INDIVIDUALS TO BECOME POLITICALLY SAVVY IN WARFARE. TODAY, WITH OUR CURRENT AVIATION TECHNOLOGY, CAPTAINS AND LIEUTENANTS

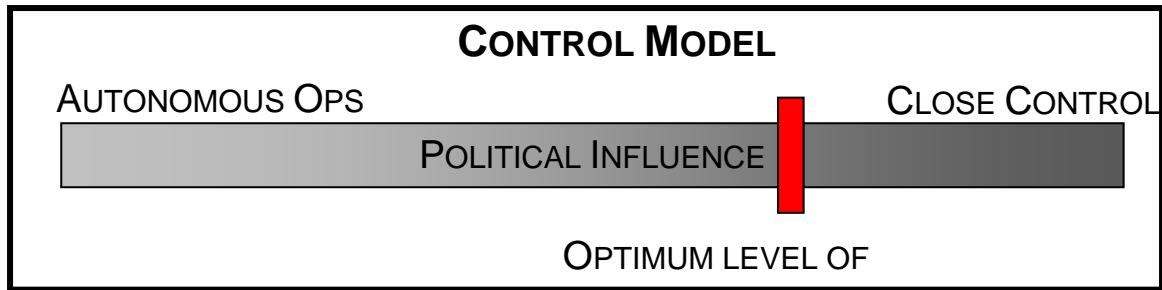
CAN LEARN THEIR TACTICAL SKILL MUCH QUICKER THAN IN THE PAST. LASER-GUIDED BOMBS TOOK AWAY MUCH OF THE ART DROPPING A PRECISE BOMB, BECAUSE NOW ALL ONE HAS TO DO IS RELEASE WITHIN AN ACCEPTABLE WINDOW AND HOLD THE LASER SPOT STILL UNTIL THE BOMB IMPACTS. GPS SERIES WEAPONS MAKE THIS EVEN EASIER. UPON ACHIEVING RELEASE PARAMETERS (USUALLY SIGNED BY THE AIRCRAFT TO THE AIRCREW BY A “RELEASE CUE”), THE AIRCREW MERELY HAS TO GIVE CONSENT AND THE BOMB DOES THE REST. SINCE IT DOES NOT TAKE MUCH TIME TO TRAIN THESE INDIVIDUALS IN THE CURRENT ART OF EFFECTIVE BOMB-DROPPING, WHY NOT SPEND THAT EXTRA TIME FOCUSING ON UNDERSTANDING POLITICAL INFLUENCE AND ACCOMPANYING CONSTRAINTS?

GENERAL CHARLES C. KRULAK, PREVIOUS COMMANDANT OF THE US MARINE CORPS, WAS FOND OF REFERRING TO THE “STRATEGIC CORPORAL.” IN 1999, HE STATED, “IN MANY CASES, THE INDIVIDUAL MARINE WILL BE THE MOST CONSPICUOUS SYMBOL OF AMERICAN FOREIGN POLICY AND WILL POTENTIALLY INFLUENCE NOT ONLY THE IMMEDIATE TACTICAL SITUATION, BUT THE OPERATIONAL AND STRATEGIC LEVELS AS WELL.”<sup>142</sup> IF A MARINE CORPORAL CAN HAVE STRATEGIC IMPACT, THEN ALMOST ANY AIRMAN, GIVEN THE THEATER-WIDE IMPACT OF AIR OPERATIONS, CAN SIMILARLY GENERATE A STRATEGIC IMPACT. THE SAME SKILLS USED TO STRIKE DIFFICULT TARGETS IN DETERIORATING WEATHER CONDITIONS COULD BE CHanneLED TOWARD UNDERSTANDING STRATEGIC IMPACT. MUCH LIKE THE SOF TROOP IN AFGHANISTAN WHO ALERTLY ANALYZED A FUNERAL PROCESSION AND ORDERED HIS TROOPS TO TAKE OFF THEIR CAPS AND PAY RESPECTS, AIRMEN CAN BE TAUGHT POLITICAL BENEFITS/IMPACT JUST AS WELL. INSTEAD OF CONTINUING THE QUEST FOR TACTICAL EFFICIENCY, LET US MOVE FORWARD ON THE QUEST FOR STRATEGIC UNDERSTANDING.

A SIMPLE SCHEMATIC PROVIDES AN INTERPRETATION OF THIS CONTINUUM OF CONTROL. AT ONE END OF THE SCALE ARE AUTONOMOUS OPERATIONS WHERE TACTICAL UNITS ARE FREE TO DETERMINE EXACTLY HOW THEY ARE TO ACHIEVE THEIR OBJECTIVES, MUCH LIKE WHAT DOCTRINE HAILS AS DECENTRALIZED EXECUTION. ON THE OTHER END IS CLOSE CONTROL WHERE TACTICAL OPERATORS ARE TOLD EXACTLY HOW TO DO THE JOB, MUCH LIKE WHAT DOCTRINE HAILS AS CENTRALIZED EXECUTION. BOTH OF THESE STYLES HAVE MERIT BASED ON THE POLITICAL INFLUENCE ON THE SCENARIO, WHICH DEFINES THE CONTINUUM BOUNDED BY AUTONOMOUS OPERATIONS AND CLOSE CONTROL. DEPENDING ON THE POLITICAL INFLUENCE, THERE WOULD BE A THEORETICAL OPTIMUM LEVEL OF CONTROL. ANY ACTUAL LEVEL OF CONTROL TO THE LEFT OF THIS OPTIMUM POINT WOULD BE A LITTLE TOO HANDS OFF FOR THE SITUATION. ANY LEVEL OF CONTROL TO THE RIGHT OF THIS OPTIMUM POINT WOULD THEREFORE BE OVER-CONTROLLING OR MICROMANAGING. AT THE FAR RIGHT, JUST OFF THE CONTINUUM, IS WHERE I PLACE ‘TRUE’ CENTRALIZED EXECUTION, WHERE THE JFACC HAS LEFT THE REALM OF CONTROL AND ENTERED THE REALM OF EXECUTION. THE EXAMPLES BELOW STAY SHORT OF THIS EXTREME.

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<sup>142</sup> Charles C. Krulak, “The Strategic Corporal: Leadership in the Three Block War,” *Marines Magazine*, January 1999.



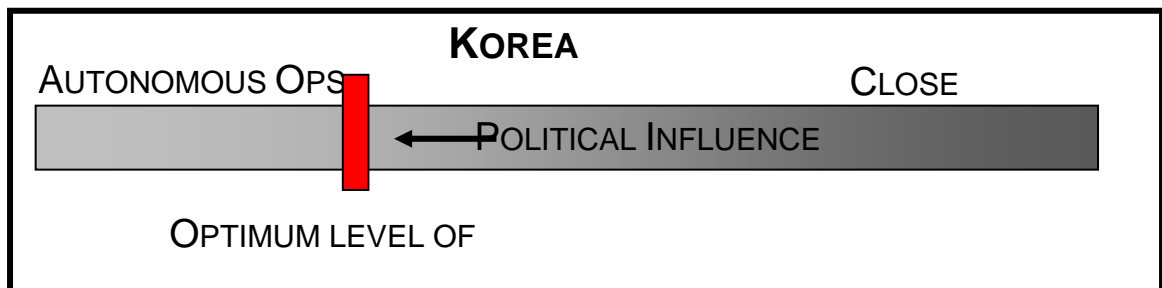
SOME ASSUMPTIONS BEHIND THE MODEL ARE NECESSARY. FIRST, THIS PAPER ASSUMES THIS TO BE THE JFACC'S CONTROL MODEL. THE JFACC'S CHAIN OF COMMAND COULD OBVIOUSLY DICTATE A SIGNIFICANT SHIFT IN THE LEVEL OF CONTROL, BUT THAT SITUATION WILL BE ADDRESSED UNDER CONSTRAINTS. SECOND, IT IS A STATIC REPRESENTATION OF A DYNAMIC WORLD. THE LEVEL OF CONTROL MAY SHIFT EITHER WAY DEPENDING ON A SIGNIFICANT EVENT (AN ACCIDENTAL EMBASSY BOMBING, FOR EXAMPLE). THIRD, IT REPRESENTS ALL CONTROL AT THE SAME LEVEL. OBVIOUSLY, A JFACC WOULD MORE CLOSELY CONTROL A DECAPITATION STRIKE THAN DAILY CLOSE AIR SUPPORT SORTIES. WITHIN THE LIMITATIONS OF THESE ASSUMPTIONS, THIS MODEL CAN PROVIDE SOME INSIGHT INTO AIR POWER CONTROL DECISIONS.

AFTER A JFACC MAKES A POLITICAL INFLUENCE DETERMINATION, THEN HE/SHE WOULD DECIDE UPON THE OPTIMUM LEVEL OF CONTROL BETWEEN AUTONOMOUS OPERATION AND CLOSE CONTROL. IN ACTUALITY, AT THE BEGINNING OF EACH CONFLICT, THE JFACC DOES MAKE SOME DETERMINATION OF THE LEVEL OF CONTROL TO EXERCISE OVER OPERATIONS. THE FACTORS ABOVE CAN ONLY APPROXIMATE WHAT EACH INDIVIDUAL JFACC CONSIDERS, BUT THE IMPORTANT THING IS THAT THIS PROCESS HAS TO OCCUR IN SOME FORM. IT IS FROM THIS DETERMINATION, REGARDLESS OF THE PROCESS USED, THAT THE JFACC WILL SUBSEQUENTLY PUBLISH SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS (SPINs) AND RULES OF ENGAGEMENT (ROE) FOR OPERATIONS. THESE DOCUMENTS SERVE AS THE JFACC'S CONTROL MECHANISMS, AND THE FACT THAT CHANGES ARE PUBLISHED DAILY IN THE AIR TASKING ORDER DEMONSTRATES HOW QUICKLY THEY CAN CHANGE.

SO FAR, I HAVE ONLY DESCRIBED SOME OF THE THINGS A JFACC COULD CONSIDER IN DETERMINING THE OPTIMUM LEVEL OF CONTROL ACCORDING ONLY TO POLITICAL INFLUENCE ALONE. HOWEVER, SPECIFIC CONSTRAINTS ACT UPON A JFACC THAT MAY MOVE THIS LEVEL OF CONTROL ONE WAY OR THE OTHER ON THE CONTINUUM. AT A MINIMUM, THESE CONSTRAINTS INCLUDE—TIME, CAPABILITY, COMPLEXITY, AND SENIOR LEADER INPUTS. A JFACC MAY SIMPLY NOT HAVE THE TIME TO CLOSELY CONTROL OPERATIONS, THEREFORE, THE TIME CONSTRAINT MAY MOVE THE OPTIMUM CONTROL POINT TO THE LEFT (RELAXING THE LEVEL OF CONTROL). CAPABILITY MAY ALSO DRIVE THE OPTIMUM CONTROL LEVEL TO DECREASE. CAPABILITY CAN BE EITHER THE INDIVIDUAL'S CAPABILITY—HUMANS ARE LIMITED IN WHAT THEY CAN DO—OR THE ORGANIZATION'S CAPABILITY TO CLOSELY CONTROL EVENTS. AN ALMOST 2,000 PERSON AOC IN OIF CAN OBVIOUSLY CONTROL MORE OPERATIONS THAN SMALLER AOC'S IN THE PAST. COMPLEXITY CAN ALSO CONSTRAIN THE LEVEL OF CONTROL. HOWEVER, TODAY'S

OPERATIONS NORMALLY HAVE MORE LIMITED OBJECTIVES THAN IN THE PAST AND TECHNOLOGY THAT MAKES IT EASIER TO CLOSELY CONTROL. HOWEVER, LARGER OPERATIONS COULD FORCE THE LEVEL OF CONTROL TO DECREASE. THE LAST CONSTRAINING FACTOR IS SENIOR LEADER INPUT. THE JFACC MAY BE TOLD HOW TO CONTROL OPERATIONS, AND IF SO, THAT WILL DETERMINE THE JFACC'S LEVEL OF CONTROL. IN TODAY'S WORLD, CONFLICTS ARE SHORTER IN DURATION, OBJECTIVES ARE MORE LIMITED, AND THE UNITED STATES USUALLY DICTATES THE PACE OF OPERATIONS. COUPLED WITH THE US' SUPERIOR TECHNOLOGICAL ADVANTAGE, IT IS EASY TO SEE HOW THE FUTURE COULD GRAVITATE EVEN MORE TOWARD CLOSE CONTROL.

TWO QUICK EXAMPLES HIGHLIGHT THE MODEL IN PRACTICE—KOREA AND KOSOVO. IN A WAR OF NATIONAL SURVIVAL, AS IN A SCENARIO WHERE NORTH KOREA INVADES SOUTH KOREA, THE POLITICAL INFLUENCE ON THE SCENARIO WOULD BE LESS DUE TO THE SEVERITY OF THE SITUATION, THE PROXIMITY OF THE AOC TO THE BORDER NECESSITATING RAPID DECISIONS, AND THE OVERRIDING POTENTIAL FOR MASSIVE US AND KOREAN CASUALTIES. IN THIS CASE, POLITICAL CONCERNS ABOUT CASUALTY MINIMIZATION AND COLLATERAL DAMAGE WOULD UNDOUBTEDLY BE SECONDARY TO MINIMIZING THE LOSS OF FRIENDLY LIFE AND TERRITORY. IN ADDITION, THE OPERATION WOULD BE MORE COMPLEX THAN RECENT OPERATIONS AND THE ENEMY GROUND OFFENSIVE MAY BE DRIVING THE PACE OF OPERATIONS INSTEAD OF THE JFACC. EVEN IF THE JFACC DESIRED TO CLOSELY CONTROL AIR POWER, HE/SHE WOULD BE CONSTRAINED BY TIME AND COMPLEXITY. IN THIS SCENARIO, THE OPTIMUM LEVEL OF CONTROL WOULD DRIVE A MORE 'HANDS OFF' APPROACH.



ON THE OTHER HAND, THE SITUATION THAT THE JFACC, LIEUTENANT GENERAL MICHAEL C. SHORT, FACED IN ALLIED FORCE IN KOSOVO WAS AN EXAMPLE OF EXTREME POLITICAL INFLUENCE. IN THIS SCENARIO, GENERAL SHORT FELT IT WAS NECESSARY TO MAINTAIN CLOSE CONTROL OF MANY TACTICAL UNITS, SINCE CONCERN OVER THE POLITICAL SITUATION WAS AT AN ALL-TIME HIGH AND MAINTAINING COALITION SUPPORT WAS CRITICAL.<sup>143</sup>

<sup>143</sup> Michael C. Short, interviewed by author, 5 January 2005.



### Conclusion

THE ARGUMENT OVER CENTRALIZED EXECUTION VERSUS DECENTRALIZED EXECUTION IS REALLY OVER THE LEVEL OF CONTROL A JFACC EXERCISES OVER OPERATIONS. THE MODEL I OFFER EXPLAINS WHY THERE IS AN INCREASING TREND IN LEADERS TO MORE CLOSELY CONTROL TACTICAL EVENTS. BY VIEWING THE PROPER LEVEL OF CONTROL ALONG A CONTINUUM FROM AUTONOMOUS OPERATION TO CLOSE CONTROL, ONE CAN ASCERTAIN THE TREND TOWARD CLOSE CONTROL. POLITICAL INFLUENCE CONTINUES TO INCREASE, WHILE MANY OF THE CONSTRAINING FACTORS ON SENIOR LEADERS HAVE RELAXED. THEREFORE, THERE IS NO REASON TO BELIEVE THAT THE NEAR FUTURE OF AIR POWER INVOLVEMENT IN CONFLICTS WILL BE ANY DIFFERENT FROM THE RECENT SCENARIOS UNDER THE GLOBAL WAR ON TERROR. AS DR GRANT HAS NOTED, "THERE WAS NO ONE SET OF RULES" OR "ONE TEMPLATE THAT WOULD ALWAYS APPLY TO EVERY SITUATION," YET DOCTRINE RETAINS THE PRIMACY OF ONE METHOD.<sup>144</sup> WHILE DOCTRINE STILL ADVOCATES THE MASTER TENET, IN REALITY, A MYRIAD OF OTHER FACTORS DETERMINE HOW LEADERS CHOOSE TO CONTROL OPERATIONS. TIMES, POLITICS, AND THE WORLD LANDSCAPE HAVE CHANGED. IT IS TIME FOR DOCTRINE TO ADJUST AS WELL.

Words

do matter. The challenge to doctrine writers is in carefully choosing words to depict the realities of today and not the lessons of yesteryear. We do not have the luxury anymore of taking forever to flush out lessons learned and best practices. We need to respond and adapt quicker to defeat an asymmetric enemy bent on turning our own advantages against us. There will be no textbook solution, no matter how much we wish there were. Nevertheless, ridding doctrine of antiquated terms and guidance is a step in the right direction. Until then, the misuse of words in current doctrine only leads air power leaders and operators to interpret (or misinterpret) these words as they see fit.

<sup>144</sup> Rebecca Grant, Remarks at the Air Force Association Symposium, Orlando, FL., 14 February 2003.

## CONCLUSION

*AN AIR FORCE WITHOUT DOCTRINE IS ALWAYS UNCERTAIN ABOUT WHAT IT IS DOING AND WHY IT IS DOING IT. AN AIR FORCE WITH OUTDATED DOCTRINE CAN, IN EFFECT, IMPRISON ITSELF, INTRINSICALLY LIMITING ITS ABILITY TO PROJECT AIR POWER.*

*-- RICHARD HALLION*

AIR POWER EMPLOYMENT IN 2005 IS MARKEDLY DIFFERENT FROM AIR POWER EMPLOYMENT IN THE PAST. IN 1943, THE ARMY ADDED CENTRALIZED CONTROL TO AIR DOCTRINE TO AVOID THE MISTAKES OF PENNY-PACKETING AIR POWER IN NORTH AFRICA.<sup>145</sup> IN ADDITION TO ITS CONCERNS OVER OPERATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS, THE US ARMY AIR FORCES (USAAF) WAS ALSO SEARCHING FOR A WAY TO DISTINGUISH AIR POWER AS DIFFERENT AND INDEPENDENT, SEEKING TO JUSTIFY A SEPARATE SERVICE. LONG AFTER ACHIEVING ITS INDEPENDENCE IN 1947, THE STILL-EVOLVING AIR FORCE AGAIN CHOSE TO UPDATE ITS DOCTRINE DURING THE VIETNAM WAR BY ADDING THE TERM 'DECENTRALIZED EXECUTION' IN AN ATTEMPT TO BREAK FREE OF THE CLOSE CIVILIAN SUPERVISION FROM WASHINGTON. ALTHOUGH IT IS EASY TO SEE HOW DOCTRINE EVOLVED AFTER THOSE LENGTHY AND, ONE COULD ARGUE, ERROR-RIDDEN CONFLICTS, IT IS TIME AGAIN FOR THE AIR FORCE TO MODIFY ITS DOCTRINE.

The term 'decentralized execution' arose in 1971 as a result of the perceived over-controlling of air targeting by leadership in Washington. Since then, Air Force doctrine has intentionally retained the term and married it the concept of centralized control—producing the master tenet of air power. However, this description does not fully explain the best way to employ air power. In 1992, fresh off the end of the Cold War and the air power centric victory from Desert Storm, the Air Force published Air Force Manual 1-1, *Basic Aerospace Doctrine of the United States Air Force*. This document warned of the dangers of “over-centralizing” control and emphasized the errors of control versus errors of execution.<sup>146</sup> However, the Air Force failed to properly ascertain the emerging issues underlying centralized control and decentralized execution. This problem remains today.

THE 2003 VERSION OF AIR FORCE BASIC DOCTRINE INCLUDED A MENTION OF CENTRALIZED EXECUTION FOR THE FIRST TIME. THIS ALONE WAS A SIGNIFICANT, BUT STILL INADEQUATE, STEP IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION. IN DESCRIBING CONDITIONS FOR CENTRALIZED EXECUTION, AIR FORCE DOCTRINE SET FORTH TWO CONCEPTS—STRATEGIC EFFECTIVENESS AND TACTICAL EFFICIENCY. THESE TWO CONCEPTS PROVIDE INSIGHT BEHIND THE REAL DEBATE BETWEEN 'CENTRALIZED' AND 'DECENTRALIZED EXECUTION.' DOCTRINE WRITERS STATED THAT UNDER CERTAIN CIRCUMSTANCES, SENIOR LEADERS MAY DESIRE “TO CONTROL STRATEGIC EFFECTS, EVEN AT THE SACRIFICE OF TACTICAL EFFICIENCY,” PROVIDING A CAVEAT TO THE MASTER TENET OF AIR POWER.<sup>147</sup> HOWEVER, WOULD NOT A SENIOR LEADER PREFER TO CONTROL STRATEGIC EFFECTS IF IT WAS POSSIBLE? THIS INCLUSION OF THE CENTRALIZED EXECUTION

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<sup>145</sup> Ibid.

<sup>146</sup> Air Force Manual 1-1, *Basic Aerospace Doctrine of the United States Air Force*, March 1992, 113-4.

<sup>147</sup> Air Force Doctrine Document 1, *Air Force Basic Doctrine*, 17 November 2003, 28.

CLAUSE INTO DOCTRINE MERELY CODIFIES WHAT SENIOR LEADERS HAVE BEEN ATTEMPTING TO DO IN RECENT OPERATIONS—CONTROLLING STRATEGIC EFFECTS—IN VIOLATION OF THE MASTER TENET. THIS SEEMS LOGICAL AND EVEN EXPECTED. YET, IF THERE ARE REASONS TO CENTRALLY EXECUTE, THEN HOW CAN CENTRALIZED CONTROL AND DECENTRALIZED EXECUTION REMAIN THE MASTER AIR POWER TENET?

THREE US CONFLICTS—OPERATION NOBLE EAGLE, OPERATION ENDURING FREEDOM (OEF), AND OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM—DEMONSTRATE MODERN COMPLEXITIES BEHIND VARIOUS LEVELS OF AIR POWER CONTROL. THESE CASE STUDIES SHOW THE APPROPRIATE LEVEL OF CONTROL IS MORE CLOSELY RELATED TO THE LEVEL OF POLITICAL SENSITIVITY RATHER THAN THE SHEER TECHNOLOGICAL CAPABILITY TO DO SO. CURRENT DECISION-MAKING PLACES MORE EMPHASIS ON POLITICAL FALLOUT AND WORLD OPINION THAN ON TECHNOLOGICAL ABILITY. HOWEVER, ONE TECHNOLOGICAL ADVANCE DOES STAND OUT. THE PREDATOR UNMANNED AERIAL VEHICLE'S (UAV) STREAMING VIDEO OF REAL-TIME EVENTS CREATES NOT ONLY THE ABILITY TO CLOSE CONTROL TACTICAL EVENTS, BUT TO OVER-CONTROL THEM AS WELL. THIS OVER-CONTROLLING COULD LEAD TO MISSED OPPORTUNITIES AS ILLUSTRATED BY THE EXAMPLE OF MISSING MULLAH OMAR DURING OEF.<sup>148</sup> IN SUM, THE LEVEL OF CONTROL IN EACH OF THESE OPERATIONS VARIED WITH THE POLITICAL PRESSURES PLACED ON THE LEADERS IN CHARGE. THESE OPERATIONS PROVIDE NEW 'BEST PRACTICES' TO ADJUST AIR FORCE BASIC DOCTRINE.

SINCE STRATEGIC EFFECTIVENESS IS THE KEY TO SUCCESS, TACTICAL INEFFICIENCIES NEED TO BE ACCEPTED BY TODAY'S AIR POWER LEADERS AND OPERATORS. THE JFACC MAY HAVE THE TECHNICAL CAPABILITY SOMEDAY TO BE ABLE TO LITERALLY EXECUTE THE ENTIRE AIR WAR FROM THE AOC. HOWEVER, THE ABILITY TO EXECUTE CENTRALLY WOULD, OF COURSE, BE BOUNDED BY THE SHEER CAPACITY OF ONE HUMAN TO DO SO. HOWEVER, IF THE CONFLICT IS SMALL ENOUGH IT COULD BE RUN BY ONE PERSON WHO ISN'T NECESSARILY REQUIRED TO BE PHYSICALLY PRESENT IN THE AIR ABOVE THE SCENE. IN THIS CASE, 'TRUE' CENTRALIZED EXECUTION WOULD BE THE LOGICAL METHOD OF APPLYING AIR POWER. IN A WAR OF NATIONAL SURVIVAL, HOWEVER, AUTONOMOUS OPERATIONS MAY BE THE ONLY FEASIBLE OPTION. A FUTURE JFACC WILL CONTROL ACCORDING TO HIS OWN PREROGATIVE TO ACHIEVE HIS OBJECTIVES. THIS ANSWER IS STILL 'IT DEPENDS.'

THERE IS NO SINGLE BEST WAY TO EMPLOY AIR POWER, MUCH AS THERE IS NO SINGLE BEST WAY TO EMPLOY SEA OR LAND POWER. MAHAN PROPOSED THAT YOU NEVER DIVIDE THE FLEET, BUT OTHERS HAVE DONE SO WITH GREAT SUCCESS. LIDDELL-HART POSTULATED THAT ONE SHOULD ALWAYS TAKE THE INDIRECT APPROACH BECAUSE IT WILL BE UNEXPECTED, BUT WHEN DOES THE REPEATED TAKING OF THE INDIRECT APPROACH THEN BECOME THE EXPECTED APPROACH? THE ANSWER LIES IN THE JUDGMENT OF FUTURE COMMANDERS. ONLY THEY CAN DETERMINE THE APPROPRIATE LEVEL OF CONTROL DEPENDING ON THEIR SITUATION. IF THEY DEEM CLOSE CONTROL NECESSARY, THEN OPERATORS SHOULD NOT BE SURPRISED BY IT. JFACCs SHOULD BE ADVISED THAT OVER-CONTROLLING CAN DECREASE TACTICAL EFFICIENCY SIGNIFICANTLY, BUT IT IS STILL WITHIN THE PREROGATIVE OF EACH JFACC TO DO SO. HISTORY WILL BE THEIR JUDGE.

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<sup>148</sup> Rebecca Grant, "The War Nobody Expected," *Air Force Magazine*, April 2002, 39.

CENTRALIZED CONTROL AND DECENTRALIZED EXECUTION REMAINS AN AIR FORCE BUMPER STICKER/SLOGAN. IT HAS BEEN WITH THE US AIR FORCE FOR ALMOST 35 YEARS AND, FOR THE MOST PART, SEEMS TO BE 'UNDERSTOOD' (OR AT LEAST UNIFORMLY MISUNDERSTOOD) BY ALL. ALTHOUGH THE WORDS CAN BE INTERPRETED DIFFERENTLY, MOST PEOPLE FALSELY CLAIM TO UNDERSTAND THE MEANING. HOWEVER, THE NOTED BRITISH THEORIST CAPTAIN BASIL H. LIDDELL HART, IN *PARIS; OR THE FUTURE OF WAR*, WARNED OF THE DANGERS OF 'SLOGANISM' IN THE MILITARY. HE STATED, "THE IDEA OF PRESERVING A BROAD AND BALANCED POINT OF VIEW IS ANATHEMA TO THE MASS, WHO CRAVE FOR A SLOGAN AND DETEST THE COMPLEXITIES OF INDEPENDENT THOUGHT."<sup>149</sup> IT IS TIME FOR THE AIR FORCE TO TRANSFORM ITS 'PET PHRASE' INTO TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY MEANING.

Future JFACCs will determine the appropriate level of control required in their situation. If JFACCs deem close control necessary, then operators should not be surprised by it. The Air Force's pride in its tactical efficiency need not stand in the way of the evolution of air power. As the Air Force strives to transform to meet today's challenges, it should not hold on to terms that imply a single 'best way' to employ air power. The future lies in the ability to adjust operations and let go of antiquated terms that only serve to confuse. The Cold War drove air power doctrine for the past four decades, but the US has moved beyond the Cold War. Now it is time for the Air Force to move beyond centralized control and decentralized execution.

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<sup>149</sup> Basil H. Liddell Hart, *Paris; or the Future of War* (London: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1972), 12.



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